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LINC PROGRAMS IN EDMONTON AS ADULT EDUCATION PRACTICE: LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES

by

Rosetta Khalideen ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled LINC Programs in Edmonton as Adult Education Practice: Learners' Perspectives submitted by Rosetta Khalideen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International/Intercultural Education.

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ABSTRACT

In the introduction to his text, *A Philosophy of Adult Education*, Bergevin (1967) bases his philosophy of adult education on the idea that "each adult participating in a learning experience should have the opportunity to help diagnose, plan, conduct and evaluate that experience along with his fellow learners and administrators." This study examines the extent to which Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs in Edmonton, Alberta, allow learners to be actively involved in the learning experiences referred to by Bergevin. LINC programs are analyzed from the perspective of the learners who were interviewed for this project.

Using the information presented by learners, an attempt is made to define LINC programs within an adult education framework as supported by current literature in the field. Within this framework, important issues such as, the degree to which learners are partners in the learning process, the importance of using their life experiences as the context for classroom activities, creating and fostering a positive learning climate and the degree to which LINC programs allow for the critical thinking skills of participants, are all discussed. Social and economic factors which impinge on programs for immigrants are also explored.

This study sees as important to illuminate whether knowledge is always located within certain perspectives and whether language learning activities within LINC programs contain suggestions which are directed from other sources considered more important than the learners themselves. Macedo (1994) suggests that how decisions are made about what people should be taught is as important as what they are taught. LINC, as adult language programs prepared to assist newcomers to integrate in the new society, have to explore successfully the learning potentials of the individuals they serve, so that they can develop as free and creative people who can positively contribute to Canada's democracy. The need was seen to explicate these practices.

There is no doubt that learning English as a Second Language is one of the key factors in promoting the integration of newcomers into Canadian society. However,

according to adult education practice which seeks to impact positively the lives of learners, language learning activities for newcomers must take into consideration their life experiences, cultures, needs and aspirations. These elements together form the foundation on which activities should be structured and policy and curriculum developed. The history, experiences and cultures of newcomers must not be viewed as barriers, but as building blocks for a meaningful education which will help them to become equal participants in Canadian society. Many writers speak of the transformative power of language (Macedo, 1994; Freire, 1989 and Shor, 1987). This study examines whether LINC programs seek to empower immigrants to help them make the connection between their personal circumstances and the wider social, political and economic sphere and whether they facilitate the active participation of these people in the new society.

DEDICATION

In memory of my late father, Lloyd G. Rajpersaud, an educator, who taught me to value a meaningful education.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background and Overview

The literature on adult education recognizes the process of learning as an active one with the learner as the central core of all activities. I agree with Brown (1994) who advocates a theoretical framework of adult education which is active, strategic, self conscious and self motivated. It is important to note that adult learners open up themselves to reach out and incorporate new experiences, relate to previous experiences and express what is latent within them. The critical part of this process for me, however, is how learners are assisted to embark on this active process of growing and changing through the painful and exhilarating experience called learning.

Draves (1984) suggests that to make adult education an active process, it is necessary to focus on the learners themselves and to involve them in designing and shaping their own learning experiences. This idea of providing learners with the opportunity to have a say in their learning activities has been documented and supported by adult educators such as Freire (1985), Brookfield (1987), Collins (1991), Knowles (1984), Jarvis (1985) and Selman and Dampier (1991) among others. They all support a model of adult education which is participatory with teachers as mainly facilitators of knowledge ensuring that programs are grounded upon the learners' expectations and needs. The underlying factor is that within adult education programs, adult learners are motivated by their needs, wants and desires, important aspects which should be considered when planning and delivering these programs.

The goal of adult education as seen by these writers is to have learners involved in their education process so that they can derive more meaning from what is learned, thus allowing them to contribute positively to their communities. There is a feeling that adults operate best when they have insight into their own strengths and weaknesses and access to their own repertoire of strategies for learning (Brown, 1994). The suggestion is for an exchange of ideas and dialogue between educators and learners within an atmosphere of

reciprocity. There should be constant consultations between teacher and learners to determine how aspects of the educational process can be altered and redesigned to make it more meaningful. Learners should be seen as initiators rather than reactors to knowledge (Brookfield, 1990:34). According to Freire (1985), the learning process should be defined through authentic dialogue between teacher and learners. He suggests a synthesis of knowledge as shared by both teachers and learners since teachers are as much learners as the participants sitting in the classroom. Nunan (1995), who relates this sharing directly to the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL), asks that teachers and learners collaboratively engage in what he calls the co-construction of the learning process.

Unlike the typical traditional school setting where students are not perceived as knowledgeable, adult learners have skills, talent, experiences and perspectives which can be used in their learning process. An adult learning setting differs from a traditional classroom in that adults, unlike children, have already gained a wealth of knowledge and experience which they can use as building blocks in the learning process (Draves, 1984).

In much the same vein, Knowles (1989) bases his model of adult education on democracy. This model is similar to those previously discussed where learning activities are based on the real needs and interests articulated by participants and their maximum participation in the education process. Knowles considers the learners' experiences to be just as important as the teacher's knowledge. In this model of adult education, the starting point is centering activities on learners' needs and interests and allowing them a voice in what should be taught and how.

Commenting on a democratic model of adult education, Bhola (1989) sees the teacher/learner dichotomy as out of place and suggests that separate roles for teachers and learners make no sense. Bhola notes that the teacher is a guide, a facilitator engaging in a mutually reinforcing partnership with learners. In his analysis of the Fourth International Conference on Adult Education held in Paris in 1988, Bhola notes that the Conference participants declared the aim of adult education as involving learners in fostering their own learning experiences. The need to ensure the active participation of learners at each

stage of the education process - program planning, program execution and evaluation was also emphasized at the Conference.

In addition to how learners are involved in shaping their learning activities, these activities must also be linked to the learners' life situations (Brookfield, 1990). Adult education is not just the accumulation of vast masses of knowledge content but the ability to interpret this knowledge in terms of the lived experiences of the learners. There cannot be the artificial isolation of curriculum content from the lives of the learners. Law (1979:45) also notes that education cannot be divorced from life in general and it is because of the attempts to separate the two and to make education more "academic" and "sterile" that such education has come to be seen as irrelevant.

Adult education should help learners to take control of their lives. Freire (1985) discusses the need for praxis where there is constant reflection of what has been learned leading to learners taking new action. Learners need to make connections between the new ideas presented and what they have already experienced and understood in their lives. Giroux (1988) feels that not using learners experiences and not allowing them to have a say in their learning activities devalues the cultural capital they possess. When teachers only pass on knowledge that has been in turn passed on to them by the experts, Giroux sees their roles as similar to those of white collar clerks. Such teachers, he claims, function within an ideology of management and control which totally ignores the realities of the learners' world. Building a model of adult education which is useful and relevant to learners, means a shift from just transmitting information in the classroom to developing learning situations which recognize the cultural traditions and experiences that different learners bring.

Adult education then, as discussed by the various authors in the field, aims at greater participation and involvement of learners in all the phases of planning and conducting their learning activities within an atmosphere of reciprocity. The underlying philosophy of this reciprocal process seems to be that of creating a link between learners and their social situations. Adult education is not merely a vehicle for enabling learners to acquire further knowledge and additional skills but to help them to become truly functional in society. The main task of adult education should be the awakening of people

to what is happening around them, providing channels of communication across class and culture and helping people to make changes and play active roles in their communities. Central to this role of education is establishing and maintaining a democratic society - a democracy which begins in the classroom.

Objective

This research will examine whether there is such democracy and the opportunity for participants' involvement in LINC programs in Edmonton, Alberta. Borg, Camilleri and Mayo (1995) view adult ESL programs as similar to other programs within adult education and suggest that any program of language designed for adult immigrants should involve input from the target group. They claim that this involvement is vital if democracy is to be enhanced by such programs. It is also the objective of this study to determine whether language learning is a meaningful experience for immigrants and whether they help to dictate the content of the curriculum. Is there any expression of faith in the learners' experiences and knowledge as the basis on which to build the curriculum, or is there a prescriptive approach? It is important to find out if learners are able to generate new ideas as well as learning materials from within their own social contexts.

It is very obvious that when immigrants arrive in the new country, educational institutions often emphasize their social adjustment to mainstream values and norms (Elsley, 1986). It is therefore very important to determine whether LINC programs are confined to simply providing services on a consumer basis. It is also important to see whether these programs are based on a concept of adult ESL which is characterized by consultative dialogue and which is sited in learning the language for overcoming whatever barriers learners may face in the new society. Within this perspective, learning a second language as a form of adult education assists learners to gain the knowledge, skills and conceptual awareness relevant to the analysis of social problems as perceived by them.

Many ESL learners experience inequalities and are disadvantaged because of the language barriers they constantly face. Without adequate communication skills, they are

disempowered and marginalized, unable to more than integrate peripherally into the new society. This research then, sees as critical the role of LINC programs as assisting learners to flesh out these issues and to find appropriate ways of overcoming the numerous barriers which affect their integration. It is therefore important to see how LINC programs address these concerns and whether these programs help newcomers to overcome the barriers which prevent them from fully participating in their new society.

Research Problem and Statement of the Research Questions

The overall problem to be investigated in this study is the participation of adult immigrants in helping to shape their own learning experiences in LINC programs. I wish to find out from learners themselves whether LINC programs are based on a concept or model of adult education which has as its goal the empowerment of its learners. Are learners being involved in making decisions about their learning experiences? What is the underlying philosophy of LINC programs?

When attention is turned to learning English as a second language, I want to know who makes the decisions about what is important to be learned and whose needs are being met in the learning process. The literature on teaching and learning ESL suggests that it is important for classroom practice to place emphasis on learning the language rather than on teaching it (Cummins, 1984; Nunan, 1985; Finocchiaro,1989; Longfield, 1984 and Burnaby and Bell, 1989). The teacher has to be seen less and less as the person who controls the teaching/learning situation - the person from whom everything flows, who knows what is to be taught and how exactly it should be taught while the learner sits at the end point of this process. If the goal of ESL programs is to help learners acquire an adequate control and use of the second language, then the focus has to be on the learners. The teacher is there to help and facilitate the learning process, but not to take control of it. It is important for me to see whether this occurs in LINC programs.

Elson (1983) notes that many ESL teachers are aware of their role as providing guidance, of being supportive, providing encouragement and stimulating and challenging their learners. At the same time, he recognizes that it is still very difficult for teachers to

move away from centre stage and allow their learners actually to become involved in the decision making process with respect to how their learning should occur. It is my experience (based on six years of working in the field of ESL in different programs) that some programs pay lip service to learners' involvement but in reality the question of who decides what is to be taught, and how it should be taught, revolves around the teachers, the policy makers and the funders. They are the primary players whose voices are always heard. They are the "experts" with the know-how of what direction ESL programs should take. There are set goals to be achieved, specific learning outcomes to be measured and ESL programs are located within a particular framework. The degree to which learners play a part in shaping this framework needs to be explicated.

The research questions to be explored in this study are:

- Do LINC programs in Edmonton, Alberta, follow the principles and practices of adult education?
- To what extent do LINC programs facilitate adult immigrants to design and take control of their own learning experiences?

The research questions have arisen out of my own experiences as an ESL teacher who has worked in LINC programs. The objective of these programs has always been articulated by the Federal government as the integration of newcomers into Canadian society. Whatever integration means is left up to individuals to determine. I am curious about how integration is determined and by whom. What does integration mean to the various stakeholders? How different is it defined by the learner?

As an ESL teacher I came to see my role more and more as a facilitator of knowledge, a learner myself, rather than a teacher. I was fascinated by the wide and varied experiences of my learners. I saw them as self determining adults who had fixed goals and aspirations. Many of them had completed years of formal education in their countries of origin. Some of them were professionals with university education and significant work experiences. Once, I remember feeling very humbled when I found out that one of my learners had been a medical doctor in China for over twenty years, yet he sat there in my class, working very diligently at trying to master the spelling exercise I had given. I learned that my participants all had a sense of where they wanted to go and

what they wanted to do. As one of them declared, "Nobody listen to you because your English no good. I know what I want except that I can't speak English." There were others who were not literate in their own language but they knew why they wanted to learn English and what their needs were. I recall one mother of about thirty-two years in mixed syllables and incorrect grammatical structure telling me, "I want learn to talk to teacher ... school ... my son ..." Another pointing to the pictures of household items in the Oxford Picture Dictionary said, "Today ... I ... names" The first participant was desirous of communicating with her son's teacher while the other wanted to know the names of specific household items.

I found that it was of utmost importance to focus on what learners wanted to know. I had to find ways of discovering what was uppermost in their minds. Most times these discoveries were made when we shared lunch or went for a quick coffee during class breaks or during our long walks on field visits. Meeting their interests and needs was what kept them motivated. In one specific class, learners' concept of learning English ranged from documenting and using new vocabulary to heated debates on the head tax issue of new arriving immigrants. Based on my own experience then as an ESL practitioner, I have a strong belief that LINC programs should be grounded in adult education practice which sees the learners and their needs as most important.

I have therefore designed my research to try to find answers as to the extent to which LINC programs are making learners and their needs a priority. I am concerned that we may be missing an opportunity to tap into the knowledge and experience of a large number of highly skilled people. I am also concerned with democracy and equality. These were and are some of my major concerns as I undertook this research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Adult Education

Definition

There are countless attempts to define adult education. Bhola (1989) speaks of the difficulty in defining adult education in terms of its changing faces. He postulates that adult education is in a state of constant evolution as old definitions become inadequate and new ones are formulated. For Jarvis (1993), the definition of adult education is problematic since some writers tend to be more inclusive or exclusive than others. He also advocates that adult education must be grounded in life experiences. He defines adult education based on the belief that adult education should be linked to the lifelong development of people and the diffusion in society of the values of peace, intellectual progress and democracy. Jarvis notes that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) maintains that adult education should be an integral part of the political process in society. Also, he underscores that the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) regards such education as an instrument of public liberation and social mobilization against oppression.

McKenzie (1991) sums up all these various definitions by pointing out that ideally adult education should help adults to develop and actualize their various potentials so that they can become more liberated individuals better able to participate in the life of their communities and institutions. He defines liberation as the freeing of persons from political regimes and systems that are unjust or discriminatory and the freeing of people from economic conditions that perpetuate poverty. All forms of liberation, he says, have to do with "the freeing of human beings from whatever curtails growth, restricts individual expression or denies what a person is entitled to by virtue of membership in the human race" (p. 130).

Philosophy

A philosophy of adult education is the general belief system which guides this practice. Such philosophy is important since as Draper (1993) notes that it is one's philosophy which forms the basis for practice. He suggests that a person's philosophy is steeped in the principles, values and attitudes which structure belief and guide behaviour in work or in daily life. A philosophy of adult education is critical. Writers have described the function of adult education as remedial, relational, liberal, and political, with the objective of developing responsible citizens in a democratic society. As one looks at the literature on adult education Jarvis (1985), Knowles (1989), Bhola (1989), Brookfield (1987), Collins (1991) among others, it becomes clear that a philosophy of adult education is based on:

- bringing about change in society
- promoting and maintaining a positive social order
- promoting productivity
- enhancing personal growth

According to Beder (1989), a philosophy of adult education can be divided into different schools of thought - the liberal progressive where there are prescribed ends of adult education and the focus is on change and democracy. In this tradition, the teacher is seen as the master of the subject matter and the students as the receivers of knowledge. The dominant method of teaching is the lecture and the main outcome is seen as the development of one's intellect and moral values. Then there is the critique which adheres to a more Marxist vision of society. This ideology criticizes the unequal structures of society and stresses the empowerment of the individual. There is the belief that learning should begin with the experiences of the learners themselves and that the teacher is a guide or facilitator. The goal of adult education is seen as fostering what Freire (1989) refers to as "critical consciousness." There is need to make learners conscious of the forces that control their lives so that they can become empowered and be able to take action to change their situation. The other school of thought is that of personal growth. Here emphasis is on the individual instead of society. The objective then of adult

education is to assist people to make choices so that they will utilize their potentials to the fullest.

Similar to Beder, Draper (1993) discusses a philosophy of adult education by also identifying three general areas based on the behaviourist, humanist and radical theories. A philosophy grounded in the first theory has its programs set up with pre-determined objectives to be achieved. Education becomes very task oriented and ignores the previous experience of learners. There are competency based tasks which are ordered and the learners must go through these in sequence in order to attain a pre-determined goal. Within the humanist philosophy, the focus in on the individual, promoting self-growth and self-actualization. This philosophy shares a belief in the goodness of the individual and in his or her capability to develop to the fullest. It promotes the concept of self direction and self-directed learning. Then there is the radical philosophy based on Marxist ideas and which leads learners to a critical examination of their life situations motivating them to action for positive social change.

Adult education originally revolved around people and their problems in a society which was seen as perfect. However, a more counter critique aspect of such education is being surfaced within critical (radical) theory of adult education. This theory focuses on social transformation.

Critical Pedagogy

Within the past two decades, critical pedagogy has emerged as an alternative theoretical perspective in education. This pedagogy provides the foundation for a more "critical" view of knowledge, people and their experiences - one that is connected to practical human needs, that is, to the individual and structural influences that operate both upon and within society (Giroux, 1989). Critical approaches to pedagogy then recognize knowledge as always partial and bound in complex ways to the social, political, economic and cultural conditions and actions that formulate meanings and interpretations (Walsh, 1990).

Embodied in knowledge itself are relations of power and control. Focault (1980) speaks of this power as present not only behind those who know and those who do not know, but more concretely grounded in the conditions which make possible the dichotomy. Knowledge is tied to the social, political, cultural and economic conditions of society and the ways it is organized in educational institutions produce and maintain the dominant interest. Critical pedagogy recognizes these interests as present in adult education, as well as having a disproportionate and limiting effect particularly on poor students, women, ESL learners and students of colour. Critical theorists believe that people should not be passive to this domination but should develop active forms of resistance and counter knowledge production (Giroux, 1985; Mc Laren, 1989 and Walsh, 1991).

Kretovics (1985) notes that although critical pedagogy can be seen as linked to critique and the emancipation of learners, it is not limited to this interpretation. He presents critical pedagogy as seeking to provide an alternative framework whereby people can understand and explain relationships between education and the wider society so that they can reflect and make judgments about the knowledge forms provided by the educational institutions and point to alternative strategies informed by more democratic interests. As Garrison (1994) notes, within critical pedagogy there is critical reflective learning between the internal and external world of the learner. He or she cannot develop meaning in isolation. The learner has to be presented with the opportunity to construct meaning through critical discourse with informed others, and these informed others may be the classroom teachers. This necessitates a shared control of the learning process. According to Garrison, one individual cannot take over control in such a situation. If not, there will be indoctrination instead of learning.

Critical Theorists

The discourse of critical pedagogy has come to be largely associated with writers such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Peter Mc Laren, Stephen Brookfield, Ira Shor, Michael Collins, among others. Their pedagogical tenets and theoretical underpinnings

are derived from a view that education is linked directly with the socioeconomic, socio-cultural and political order.

Freire (1972) sees education as a purposeful contextual transformation which provides learners with the opportunity to analyze and interpret their own lived experiences. Freire's method of "teaching" literacy skills to the poor people in Brazil so that they could improve their standard of living and take control of their lives has been referred to as "conscientization." Within this process of learning, people extend both understanding and consciousness of their cultural and historical background centered in the personal and social construction of meaning. Through these meanings, constructed and deconstructed, learners become empowered in that they are able to understand and transform their situation.

Of course, these arguments for a more critical approach to learning are directly in conflict with traditional schooling which Freire says uses the "banking" method of education where learners are seen as empty minds to be filled with facts by teaching experts. Kretovics (1985) in critiquing traditional education says that such education has been placed within a technological framework seeking to determine how people can best fit within the structure of the given society. He supports Freire's idea that traditional education sees knowledge as the acquisition of facts and figures. The question which is always foremost in the minds of traditional educators is how best can learners absorb the body of knowledge needed to be passed on.

Giroux (1988), commenting on traditional schooling points out that educational traditionalists have ignored the question of making education meaningful. There is no emphasis on making people critical and in the long run emancipatory. It is the feeling among those advocating a critical pedagogy that traditional education suppresses rather than exposes important questions regarding knowledge, power and domination. Shor (1986) sees the education system as hierarchically structured and corporate in nature. He says that what it seeks to do is produce a "cafeteria" style curriculum, authoritarianism and ultimately inequalities.

Giroux, like Freire, sees education as linked to the social, cultural and political milieu. In his discourse on literacy for critical thinking, he advocates that literacy must be

defined primarily in terms of the political and social context (Giroux, 1993, 1988). He explains that it is political and social in that how people read the world is always embedded in relationships and power structures of society. People read the world differently according to their individual circumstances of race, class, gender or politics. These differences, posits Giroux, are very critical for understanding not simply how to read and write but how to recognize that one's identity matters as a part of an active set of politics and practices aimed at bringing about democracy, equality and freedom. Piper (1988) believes that awareness of the relation between language and ideology is central to critical pedagogy since it is through language that the control and power structures of a society can be embedded, conceptualized and transmitted.

Giroux believes that critical pedagogy can lead to transformation through three specific fields of discussion - production, text analysis and lived cultures. Production is seen as understanding education within the larger framework of societal structures of politics, power and inequalities while text analysis focuses on the ability to analyze and deconstruct curricular and other materials making them the objects of inquiry. Lived cultures can be seen as a framework of questions which explores the lived experiences of people and analyzes how power, dependency and social inequalities help or limit learners considering such factors as race, class, gender or cultural background. The relationship between power and knowledge is not just chance but is related to ideology. It is important for learners to understand the dynamics of knowledge, power and control. There needs to be a dialectical analysis of knowledge in a process of reflection and transformation. Education and the wider society can definitely be dialectically linked within critical pedagogy.

There is the recognition then, by critical theorists that all knowledge is constituted in a particular social, cultural and historical set of relationships. Knowledge is not value free but is an ideological process with relationships in power, culture and control. Pennycook (1990) claims that one of the main tasks of critical pedagogy is to make explicit how knowledge is conceptualized and legitimated within schools and the society at large and to examine critically those forms of knowledge used to produce new forms. As Giroux (1988) underscores, within critical pedagogy, knowledge and power are

brought together not only to ascertain experiences but to question and explore these, to shed light upon broader theoretical considerations, to identify limitations. It is not the objective of critical pedagogy to make learners more efficient consumers of existing norms and practices. In fact, Collins (1991) calls for critical thinking as the central core of adult education in the belief that such thinking would reveal how society is structured to serve the interests of one dominant group of people while marginalizing a greater part of the populace. He calls for a more transformative pedagogy and the refashioning of a just society. In the sense of a "prophet" more than a "revolutionary," he declares that the fostering of critical pedagogy should be with the object of justice, emancipation and equality.

Brookfield (1987, 1990) also links his discourse of critical thinking to making learners conscious of the forces which act upon their lives and which are responsible for their present circumstances. Brookfield is of the view that emancipatory action as a result of critical thinking would help people move away from controlling social and political forces and allow them to take control of their lives and gain individual and collective freedom. However, despite all the negative attributes that critical pedagogy places on traditional schooling, this theory itself also has its fair share of criticisms.

Criticisms of Critical Pedagogy

Criticisms have been levelled against critical pedagogy by those who value a more conservative and rational approach to education. Knoblanch and Brannon (1993) point out that critical pedagogy faces problems of implementation rooted in what they call an assortment of Marxist, feminist and post-modern intellectual positions. They say that these positions present conceptual difficulties that make the theory seem very daunting. It is not easy for practitioners to embark on the course proposed by this theory since there are not very clear cut guidelines for practice. Knoblanch and Brannon see critical theory as more philosophical theorizing. This analysis is supported by Gore (1993) who feels that critical theorists (in particular, Giroux and Mc Laren) have failed to come up with specific practices for the classroom. She claims that they describe a broad framework - a

social vision for teachers to work at creating but are unable to prescribe specific processes that would bring this vision to fruition. Going back to Knoblanch and Brannon, their greatest criticism is that within this theory the oppressed are treated with a simplicity that is paternalistic and somewhat humiliating. They find this unethical.

In addressing the issue of ethics within critical pedagogy, Gore (1993) is of the view that the aspect of ethics is sadly lacking. It would seem that critical pedagogy leads to making assumptions and generalizations about people without their ever being aware of this. Gore feels that critical theorists emphasize what to do and say for others rather than what they are asking others to do for themselves. There is a "godfathering" kind of attitude by the critical pedagogist. Gore notes that in the effort to move people beyond oppression there has been a lack of focus on reflectivity. Her major question is whether educators should label themselves as a transformative intellectuals or practise critical pedagogy without attempting to define their pedagogy in this particular way.

Kirk (1986) expresses a concern about the professional ethics of practitioners in the field of critical pedagogy. His fear is that teachers may not have a real understanding of what this pedagogy is all about and may become involved in the wrong way for the wrong reason. He criticizes critical pedagogy for overlooking the problem of teachers themselves not being aware of the inert nature of knowledge and its role in perpetuating social inequalities before they can become involved in a process of dialogue with their students. Kirk wonders how this would be accomplished. The vision of critical thinking, he claims, seems very utopian with very idealized solutions.

Ellsworth (1989) agrees with the criticisms of a uopian vision of critical pedagogy singling out its broad objectives of democracy, empowerment, equality and justice as an educational mirage. She sees such a pedagogy as based on the "ideal" rather than the "rational." For her, reflection and critical questioning in critical pedagogy are not rational actions since the learners doing the questioning would have gone through a process of socially constructed irrational experiences because of their disempowerment and marginalization. She alludes to the fact that strategies designed in a more critical approach to education give the illusion that there is equality but the fact is that the authoritarian nature between teacher and students cannot automatically be discarded.

Ellsworth also sees empowerment as treating the symptoms but leaving the disease itself unattended. She suggests that more realistically, learners should be helped to become "capable of a sustained encounter with currently oppressive formations and power relations that refuse to be theorized away" (p. 308).

Connelly (1996) makes the point that Jurgen Habermas has been one of the theorists who has had a great influence on the development of critical theory, yet, he claims that many of the proponents of critical theory do not demonstrate a familiarity with Habermas'' work. He is concerned that there is some ambiguity and contradiction regarding the way critical theory is being expounded noting that there is a distinct difference between critical thinking and critical theory. Connelly singles out one adult educator, Michael Collins whom he says is concerned with the way a number of adult educators are using the term so broadly even to include self-directed learning which Collins sees as still instrumental and working towards a colonization of education. Connelly is very critical of the misrepresentation and different frameworks for critical theory suggesting that educators become more familiar with Habermas' work so that there can be a really informed theory.

Although some of the facts may be misrepresented by the critics of critical pedagogy, their illustrations of the difficulty of involving learners in critical thinking skills are very important and worthy of attention. Their observations and comments do add to the literature on critical pedagogy and provide stimulation for the "critical" debate about education. They also present a much needed voice against what writers may refer to as the canonization of critical pedagogy.

A Participatory Model of Adult Education Based on Critical Pedagogy

Within the critical theory literature there is the underlying philosophy of adult education as an instrument of conscientization and empowerment and not merely a tool for the delivery of information and skills. This transformative education is characterized by a curriculum which is organized around ideas which are important to learners, highly interactive teaching strategies, active learner involvement and activities which require

learners to participate in personal, social and civic action to make their classroom and communities more democratic and just.

Originally, the model of adult education has always been one which comprised five stages - identifying needs, defining objectives, identifying experiences to meet these objectives, planning and sequencing learning activities and evaluating the program in terms of attainment - the Tyler rationale (Tyler, 1967). Critical theorists criticize this classical model of program planning based on the Tyler rationale as being conceptualized within a narrow paradigm, which is inconsistent with the real world of adult education. Within this model, authority is assumed by the educational institution.

Arguments are now for a more learner centered approach to adult education. There has to be a constant process of negotiation between learners and those who facilitate the learning process. Giroux (1988) feels that it is difficult to outline objectives in advance, particularly objectives which would relate to the development of critical consciousness in adults. A predetermined objectives approach is basically instrumental and does not focus on very significant parts of personal learning. This approach is in direct conflict with the belief that the most significant learning experiences of adults are not those specified in advance in terms of objectives. What is important within adult education is that adults participate in reflecting on their experiences, their goals and aspirations, the social context in which they find themselves, with the hope that this may lead to positive changes in their self concept and the questioning of their uncritically internalized norms. They need to be presented with the opportunity to re-evaluate their behaviour from a new perspective - Mezirow's perspective transformation or Freire's conscientization (Mezirow, 1991 and Freire, 1972).

With regard to needs assessment, needs should be expressed by the learners themselves - felt needs instead of prescribed needs. Bergevin (1967) says that participants in adult education programs should not be forced into predetermined activities by a group of administrators who "frequently orient the program towards administrative convenience rather than the students' needs" (p. 50). On this score, Klevins (1972) suggests that the best method for identifying needs is to ask participants what they would like the program to do for them. He feels that adult learners come to the classroom with certain

expectations and therefore, "it is critical for the adult student to be both actively involved in determining his goals and his educational process" (p. 88). Nunan (1985), in discussing the needs analysis he did on the Adult Migrant Education program in Australia, suggests that establishing learning needs of individual learners can only be done through the lengthy process of getting to know each learner. Time has to be spent in developing relationships with learners so that the educator can understand what are learners' expectations of the program and the circumstances that brought learners into the classroom in the first place. It is only through dialogue with learners that **real** needs can be identified and used for program development. If real needs are not addressed, then learning becomes a static process.

Long (1983:222) says that when educators operate through prescribed needs they "condemn education to an adaptive reactive model and turn themselves [educators] into mere providers of consumer goods." Long also discusses the failure of models of programs to address the broader sociological and psychological perspectives in program planning. This is an important consideration since planners often are not aware of larger social issues and philosophical concerns regarding the purpose of adult education. They do not understand that adult education programs are created within a political climate which ultimately frames the outcome of such education.

Bergevin (1967) believes that adult education must have a greater purpose than learning skills for employment. It should be able to help people live full and productive lives. There is no need for adult teaching/learning based on the educator's propagation of truth or what should be, without the learner having a say in what is happening. Bergevin, says that this one way street of learning retards the adult maturation process. If there is to be full adult growth and development, this will depend on how ideas are taught, or whether adults are encouraged to approach problems and truth as full partners in the learning process. Bergevin stresses that adults should have something to say about the forces which shape them and their lives. This is an important aspect of the education process since if adults are to develop into mature persons who can take responsibility for shaping their personal and social destiny, they should be provided the opportunity to

assume such responsibility. Telling them that they must be responsible persons is not effective. They need to practise being responsible in their learning activities.

Klevins (1972) supports this argument. He sees adult learners as equal partners in the learning process. He emphasizes that adults learn from each other and with each other in a community of mutual sharing and a curriculum prescribed by the rapidly changing needs of society. Klevins believes that all parties concerned must be involved in the entire planning of the education process.

It would seem then that a basic tenet of adult education is the involvement of learners in the planning of the education process. The teacher serves as a potential guide but learners are involved in the decision making process. Knowles (1970) suggests that where numbers are too large to warrant individual input, educators can make use of representative committees or councils where all learners can participate by proxy. The learning/teaching transaction is a mutual responsibility of both teacher and learner. A study conducted by Freire and Enoch in Freire (1985) to examine a collaborative approach to literacy favours this argument. They found that with such an approach, learners were able to develop more positive concept of self and gain self-esteem. Cognitive benefits included the opportunity to share knowledge with other learners and the teacher, ability to retain ideas and the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Learners were also able to gain a strong sense of independence and saw the teacher as a guide instead of the expert on all issues.

Bhola (1989) also sees the teacher as a guide. He points out that the teacher has to be more of a catalyst than an instructor, opening the way for questioning and active learning. He suggests that adult learners should be challenged to participate in their own learning. Also, they should be able to challenge curriculum changes, content and evaluation. He concludes that adults learn best when education is empowering and liberating.

Shore (1994) agrees with the idea of challenge in the classroom. In her article *Possibilities for Dialogue: Teacher Questioning in an Adult Literacy Classroom*, she advocates for teaching practices which encourage learners to "think, create and question in order to participate effectively in society." This approach, she claims, has to be

effected through the kind of teaching which encourages learners to participate actively in what they learn, how they learn it and why. A more critical approach to teaching/learning challenges the notion that there should be acceptance of the status quo and tolerance of systematic patterns of discrimination embedded in the practice of adult education. It should be noted, however, that it is not enough to say that learners are involved in their own education. How such involvement takes place is also very important. There should be strategies aimed at intentionally supporting active program development beginning with the realities of the learners and their personal experiences.

Brown (1994), in her article "*The Advancement of Learning*," advocates for adult education to be sited within a framework which is active, strategic, self conscious and self motivated. She argues that learners need to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and develop their own strategies for learning. Every learner is an individual with different capabilities and different life experiences. They will participate in their education process in different ways. What is important is that they are given the opportunity to do so. Elsley (1986) believes that for many practitioners in adult education, participation by learners in their own program is the central question for which there are no clear cut answers. Non-participation by disadvantaged sections constitutes a major challenge to the idea of adult education. Central to an understanding of participation in adult education, concludes Elsley, are the concepts of social class and subculture.

Further, the link between social class, and other social position indicators such as gender, age, education and ethnicity and participation in education has been used to discuss wider issues such as the equality of opportunity. On this issue, Jones (1984) notes that there is a lack of participation in adult education from those in the lower socio-economic groups. He feels that people are discouraged from participating in their own education by a sense of their own inadequacy and by their fear of an unwelcoming bureaucracy in administrative arrangements.

It can be seen that the adult education literature is permeated with references to the development of active and critical approaches to learning. The same is true for learning English as a Second Language. Nina Wallerstein's (1993) work on using

problem-posing techniques for the teaching of ESL, based on a critical theory model of adult education, sets the tone for further development. Wallerstein suggests in her work that teaching practices have to encourage learners to think, create and question in order to participate effectively in society.

Critical Pedagogy and the Teaching of Adult ESL

Adult ESL programs seem to follow the more traditional form of education with an emphasis on a technological framework which tries to determine how best newcomers can fit within the given structure of society (Pennycook, 1990; Graman, 1985 and Macedo, 1994). Pennycook (1990) condemns the teaching of adult ESL as a technical process designed by the experts and passed on to the learners. He finds that teachers are obsessed with passing on technical language skills and everyday kinds of information to their learners. There is information for life skills or survival skills and focus is on activities like pronunciation, accent reduction and constructing grammatically correct sentences.

Graman (1985) admits that ESL teachers do struggle with relating inappropriate knowledge to the daily realities of classroom practice forgetting the social, political and cultural milieu in which the language is situated. He highlights how second language teaching is reduced to transmitting messages rather than providing an understanding of people and their relationships to the rest of society. From the comments made by the aforementioned writers, it would seem that adult ESL programs function similarly to schools as socializing agents with the objective of categorizing, filtering and *cooling* out learners so that their ambitions are not *utopian* but realistic in terms of available opportunities within the new society. The package of ESL learning seems to include discipline, conformity, and the ability to follow instructions to prepare oneself for the workforce and to accept supervision and one's position in the new society.

Pennycook (1990) also raises the issue of ESL teaching being divorced from social and cultural issues. The focus has been with how language learning can be achieved and this has been done at the expense of more important issues. Too much

emphasis is placed on setting behavioural objectives with the assumption that language learning can be accomplished by mastering pre-specified hierarchically arranged items. Pennycook argues that a theory of language is inadequate for second language education and isolates the language rather than places it within a societal context. Shor (1987) adds to this argument with his strong belief that literacy is not the development of functional skills and the acquisition of a fixed body of knowledge. Its aim should be to see knowledge as socially constructed as an ideological process and to help decode the ideological dimensions of the texts, institutions and social practices so that learners can become ***thinking*** citizens capable of analyzing, and where necessary, challenging the oppressive characteristics of society.

Wallerstein (1993) agrees that critical thinking is important to any ESL classroom practice. She points out that learners need to be presented with the opportunity to discuss their experiences and uncover the social pressures which affect them as a minority people. Finocchiaro (1989) notes that ESL teachers have to keep learners highly motivated by "using their interests, lives and communities as a starting point for creating teaching situations" (p. 23). Learners need to explore their own life situations and to use their new found language skills in their lived context. Frolich and Paribakht (1984) also speak to the importance of teachers creating life situations in the classroom and simulating the conditions learners will be faced with outside. These realities brought into the classroom, posits Wallerstein (1993), help learners to develop a critical view of society and by analysis and reflection, learners can adopt positive stances towards change within their own lives and their communities.

Graman (1985), in sharing his personal experiences as an ESL instructor for newcomers describes how ESL learners "... suffer from an abuse of professional authority that denies the value of their ideas and inter-language constructions" (p. 438). It is the view of teachers and administrators that learners should get on with the grammatical content and pronunciation of words. Graman, however, advocates that for language to be meaningful to the learners, for it to provide them with the linguistic ability to function as active decision makers in society, there has to be dialogue about the reality of the learners. He denounces language classes which focus on what he labels the

"tourist" kind of information which focuses on ordering a cup of coffee, asking direction to the shopping centre or engaging in travel - these satisfy the survival needs of limited social functions. The language to accomplish these tasks is instrumental and very easy to learn.

On this score, Auerbach and Burgess (1985) suggest that there needs to be a re-examination of the survival literature in ESL which has become quite popular. Survival materials are oriented around daily living activities such as banking, housing, health and employment. There is no emphasis on the tasks which adults need to perform in their everyday lives in curricular development. Also, it is doubtful that survival curricula are situationally realistic with the real world actually presented in the ESL classroom. It is not a true reflection of what adults actually encounter outside of the classroom.

Auerbach and Burgess (1985) point out that texts of ESL do not take into account the socio-economic conditions of newcomers' lives. They reflect middle class culture, values and financial status. Graman (1985) tells about how he finds ESL texts used for his class useless and far removed from the realities of his learners. He found the texts "artificial and alienating" and not in keeping with the life situations of the learners he worked with (p. 435). But as Kretovics (1985) underscores, it is a known fact that the interests, which underlie mainstream educational perspectives, serve to constitute what is legitimate knowledge. What is excluded from the ESL curriculum is as important in shaping people's perceptions of reality as what is included. There is failure to address such issues as employment discrimination, the non-recognition of learners academic credentials, racism, hostility, marginalization, injustice. There are always polite conversations taking place at the doctor's office, over the telephone for an under paid bill or a customer returning an article of clothing without a receipt. These do not prepare learners for the real experiences when they encounter them - the situation of tenants who are refused to rent an apartment because of their skin colour or a Chinese Canadian who walks down the street and is called a "yellow chink."

What ESL texts also do is prescribe certain roles for learners. Sociologists have pointed out that education is an important social and political force which reproduces class formation (Sarup, 1991). Auerbach and Burgess (1985) explain that in survival

materials, the hidden curriculum often "takes the form of preparing students for menial positions and teaching them the corresponding language of subservience" (p. 158). They go on to say that texts highlight the lowest paying jobs as options for newcomers such as busboy, waiter, cook, janitor, factory worker, and dishwasher among others. Wallerstein (1993) concurs with this argument and lists some very popular ESL texts in which these jobs are the main focus of the units/themes on employment. There is a presupposition that newcomers, despite their previous education and experience, must start at the bottom. Piper (1988) points to Brandt (1980) who refers to the exploitation of immigrant workers in the United States, Britain and Canada who work far below the level of their capabilities. As an ESL facilitator who has worked with hundreds of newcomers, and as a newcomer myself, I agree that this has been the trend. One glaring example is that I have visited every major mall in Edmonton and have discovered that the majority of cleaners in the food courts are immigrants many of whom have held "professional" jobs in their countries of origin.

The truth that the structural demands of the economy - the need for cheap labour which Canadians are unable to supply, is seldom examined. Learners are taught the language associated with being at the bottom of the power hierarchy is what Auerbach and Burgess conclude. Pein (1993) therefore calls for the deconstruction of ESL texts and alternative ways of looking at language and putting it into specific institutional and social contexts and examining how beliefs and attitudes are embedded in these contexts. In the same light, Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) suggest that teachers need to examine how the roles for educators and learners are outlined in texts. They have found that there are texts which build great chasms between teachers and learners and which see learners as:

> unquestioning dolts, duped into an uncritical acceptance of distorted meaning perspectives which have made structural oppression, economic inequity, racism and sexism and the silencing of divergent voices seems wholly natural (p. 75).

Macedo (1994), in analyzing literacy education for minorities, advocates that there needs to be a democratic and liberatory education different from traditional approaches which emphasize the acquisition of mechanized basic skills while divorcing education

from its ideological and historical context. He suggests that ESL programs should be largely based on the notion of a democratic and liberating education in which education could be seen as one of the main vehicles by which "oppressed and voiceless" people are able to play an active role in the transformation of their society.

Newcomers who must learn the new language so as to integrate in the new society must then be given an opportunity to become actors in the construction of the society of which they would like to be a part. Kretovics (1985) calls for critical pedagogy in the ESL classroom which would help to provide learners not only with functional skills but also with the conceptual tools necessary to critique and engage society with its inequalities and injustices. This is glaringly noted in a study conducted by OISE in 1980 on adult learning principles and how these apply to literacy programs (Brundage, 1980). Brundage notes that the International Symposium for Literacy found that, "Literacy like education in general is a political act. It is not neutral, for the act of revealing social reality in order to transform it, or of concealing it in order to preserve it, is political ..." (p. 6). The report continues to say that all education is constructed on a political philosophy, which makes the assumptions about how and what will shape learners' experiences.

The education of ESL learners is more than maintaining the status quo, the concern with filling slots within the social and economic milieu. It is about providing for democratic thinking people. Many immigrants and refugees come to Canada because of oppression and dictatorship rules in their own countries. They look to Canada for freedom and democracy but such freedom cannot be achieved within a language which seeks to confine rather than open up understanding of the broader perspectives of the present society, and societies from which learners have come.

Coppyock (1995) notes that democracy requires more than just the opportunity to vote and obey the laws of citizenry. It includes the opportunity to participate in society in a meaningful way. Participating democracy requires that citizens become involved in making decisions on issues about their education and their lives in general. The skills for doing this need to be fostered in the classroom but it is known that Canadian society is managed by a series of organizations or bureaucracies, whose roles are to guide, shape and facilitate but yet to constrain its members. Graman (1985) suggests that classroom

practices should help learners to develop intellectually and linguistically critically learning the language to enhance their ability to gain access both outwardly to the data of interrelated societies and inwardly to the society of adaptation. This gives the opportunity to locate themselves in a broader economic and socio-political context.

A curriculum based upon critical thinking asks ESL teachers to emphasize their learners' experiences. Cummins (1984) in his study of cognitive competence of ESL learners suggests that learners acquire second language conversational proficiency sooner than academic proficiency because there is considerable more meaning in face to face context embedded situations than in reduced academic tasks. He declares that ESL learners have often failed to develop high levels of second language skills because the language has not been situated in the context of their everyday lives. Adult ESL learners cannot learn "usefully" unless teachers develop an understanding of the different ways by which students' perceptions and identities are constituted. As McLaren (1994) points out, teachers need to have an understanding of how learners' experiences in their everyday lives produce different voices students employ to give meaning to their existence in society. It is crucial for teachers to understand how the social world is experienced by students. If teachers do not try to have this deeper understanding then they will be able to provide students with the language but not with a voice.

For critical pedagogy to take place in the ESL classroom, teachers themselves must first learn to think critically. They need to question the formal and hidden curriculum so as to identify these ideological and social practices that prevent learners from being equal members of their society. Teachers must be willing to develop and use critical language in order to structure school experiences around a public vision of self and social empowerment. As Mc Laren (1994) notes, this type of struggle also seeks to dignify teachers in their capacity as social critics. Teachers have to do more than legitimate shared assumptions and agreed upon established conventions. "The teacher performs a social function that is never innocent. There is no neutrality, non partisan sphere into which the teacher can retreat to engage student experience" (Mc Laren, 1994: 241).

There is the feeling, however, that teachers are afraid to question because they fear the answers they may receive. It is much more secure to talk about things for which the answers are known. Teachers who are committed to traditional schooling see classes on critical thinking as a threat to their established values - questions by the students may show them as ignorant. Macedo (1994), in tracing his life as an immigrant in the United States and sharing his experience of grappling with learning the language, says that he came to the realization that many people who acknowledge their philosophy of empowering minorities feel uncomfortable when these minorities actively develop their own voice and become critical and outspoken. In the introduction to his book, he claims that these same liberal educators turn around and try to stifle the voices of those minorities particularly if those voices threaten their own class and privileged position.

There is also the possibility that learners may react negatively to critical pedagogy after spending years in the traditional classroom setting. Nunan (1995) points out that it is a mistake to assume that learners come into the language classroom with a natural ability to make choices and decisions about what and how to learn. He claims that there are few learners naturally endowed with the ability to make informed choices. He advocates for a learning-centred (rather than learner-centred) approach in the classroom. This approach he hopes will carry learners towards the ability to make critical pedagogical decisions by systematically training them in the skills they need to make such decisions. Focus is not only on content but also on process. Shor (1987) also addresses this very concern but in a different way. He considers that there is nothing wrong with learners not responding to a critical approach in the classroom. He says that if this happens it does not invalidate the process of encouraging dialogue and participation among learners. It is just that the situation may not be ready for this transformation process. Shor declares that this is important to note since teachers may feel that there have to be constant successes to be convinced that the right decision was made to introduce learners to a more critical approach to learning.

It is acknowledged, as some of the critics have claimed, that putting critical pedagogy into practice is not a very easy task. With ESL education, part of the difficulty lies in the textbooks and curricula ESL programs use. These often dictate what programs

should be like (Graman 1985). To complicate matters further, funding for language programs depends on meeting the demands of the provincial and federal governments or other funding agencies. For funds disbursed, there needs to be some form of accountability, the easiest being, measuring output at the end of programs in terms of test scores or the ability to complete competency-based tasks. Applying critical pedagogy to learning a second language is also specially challenging with groups of learners who are less critically conscious. It is very difficult to involve the critical thinking aspect to the teaching - learning situation when people do not wish to take an analytical stance to what is being learnt. The most challenging task then becomes helping people to search for, and examine critically, the foundation on which their own views are built.

The literature suggests that if ESL programs are to respond to the challenge of creating a more just, democratic and humane social order, and if newcomers are to become truly active and responsible citizens, then the type of education these programs provide should be seriously examined. ESL education should be relocated within a broader range of a holistic educational, social, political and historical context. The empowerment of learners should be seen as important. This empowerment has to include not only a critical element that would help learners plan for their own learning experiences and draw upon and investigate their own cultural resources and knowledge claim but also a transformative vision that would aim to change the negative forces within society.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

Political and Social Setting

Background

In order to place this study within a particular context, it is important to describe the political and social setting in which LINC programs are situated. Selman (1983) describes Canada as an immigrant society. The government of Canada seeks to encourage and facilitate the entry and adaptation of immigrants to Canadian society by promoting cooperation between the government of Canada and other levels of government and non-governmental agencies with respect to such adaptation. One of the major concerns of Canadian immigration policy is that the prospective immigrant does not become a financial burden to Canadian society but, rather, that such a person should be in a position to contribute to the nation's economic development.

Alberta responds to providing services for newly arrived immigrants in a number of ways. Alberta Immigration and Settlement manages provincial immigration and settlement activities. According to Alberta Career Development and Employment (1992), this division assists in developing immigration plans and policies which promote economic growth. Activities are planned to enable new immigrants to meet skill shortages in the workforce and there are support programs which are supposed to help immigrants to meet their own, as well as, Alberta's economic and social goals. Programs for new immigrants include reception, orientation to life in Canada, translation, interpretation, language training, employment training, family support and citizenship services. The federal government allocates a substantial sum of money to the province of Alberta for the education of newly arrived immigrants to facilitate their integration into Canadian society. However, there is a new initiative being put in place by the federal government whereby federally funded programs will now come under the administration of the provinces. This process is being referred to as Settlement Renewal.

Settlement Renewal

Settlement and language training, together with other services for immigrants, has largely been the responsibility of the federal government. The Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) helps newcomers to adapt as quickly as possible to Canadian society by providing reception services, referral information orientation sessions, interpretation and translation services, paraprofessional counselling and employment related services. The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program funds educational institutions, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, individuals and other levels of government to give basic language training to adult newcomers. There is also the Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP) for government-assisted refugees who receive income support for up to one year after they arrive.

The role of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), involves developing national policies to issuing income support cheques to government-assisted refugees. In 1994, CIC took a close look at its services and programs and held public consultations on immigration with over 10,000 Canadians. The results of these two processes led CIC to develop a strategic framework in which a simpler and more efficient system of funding settlement projects could be designed. CIC has decided that it will now remove itself from the direct administration of settlement services over the next two years and has begun a process of what is being termed **settlement renewal**. This process will change the way newcomer settlement and integration services are managed in the country. The idea is to place more responsibility for newcomers into the hands of the provinces.

There were four major issues for the provinces to come to terms with and these have been listed in the *Settlement Renewal Consultations Strategy* document of 1995 published by CIC. The issues are: maintaining accountability for federal integration funds, the continuing federal role in newcomer integration, the composition and functioning of regional local structures responsible for the administration and allocation of the federal integration funds and the refugee obligations and humanitarian commitments of the Canadian Government. Consultations on the settlement renewal process were held in the various provinces across the country and the result of these has been that the provincial governments are the preferred partners. It has been announced by

CIC that negotiations with the provinces are currently taking place and there is the hope that the actual transfer of settlement programs to the provinces will take place sometime within the 1998/99 fiscal year.

At this point, I would like to make an important observation regarding the consultations. In keeping with the federal government's plan to hold constructive dialogue with those directly involved in the process of "settlement" for newcomers, a number of service providers were invited to the consultations. These included private and not-for-profit agencies, public institutions, and provincial government departments among others. The *Settlement Renewal Consultations Strategy* document does mention the importance of having newcomers themselves as a part of the consultations. However, at both consultation meetings I attended in Edmonton, the absence of newcomers themselves was notably significant. At present, I have no evidence to substantiate whether this group of people were consulted through another forum or whether they were completely left out of the process.

LINC Programs

The transfer of settlement programs to the provinces includes the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. LINC was set up by the federal government in 1992 to assist newcomers with overcoming language barriers. Barbara McDougall, the then Federal Minister of Employment and Immigration, announced a five-year immigration plan. The part of the plan, which addressed the settlement and integration of immigrants was called the Federal Integration Strategy (FIS). One of the most important mandates of FIS was to set new directions for language training and increase funding to make a more flexible range of options accessible to a greater number of immigrants. When Employment and Immigration Canada released its new Immigration Language Training Policy (ILTP), instead of the three programs which were available before - Occupational English, Settlement Language Program and Language at Work, the new program defined two ESL options for immigrants - LINC and Labour Market Language Training (LMLT).

Employment and Immigration Canada in its LINC Guide (1993) states the objective of the LINC program as providing basic language training to new immigrants in either English or French. The hope is that LINC will bring about "the social, cultural and economic integration of immigrants and refugees into Canada so that they may become participating members of Canadian society as soon as possible" (p. 2). The intent of the program is to include orientation to Canadian material.

The LINC program accounts for about 80% of all federal money available for language training in Canada and allows for between 1000 to 1200 hours of language training. It is a program that was designed strictly for adult newcomers. Canadian citizens are not eligible and the age for intake into the program is 17 years. LINC classes are free of charge. Within Alberta, the Student Finance Board provides training grants for learners who qualify under the social assistance program to attend full-time LINC programs certified by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development.

In Edmonton, potential LINC learners were previously assessed on the performance of seven tasks which involved speaking, listening, reading and writing through the A-LINC assessment tool. As of January 1997, learners are being assessed through the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA). The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) is a new initiative by the federal government to standardize the description of English as a Second Language proficiency levels nationally. These descriptors range from literacy (pre-benchmark) to Benchmark 12 and are organized into the three skill areas of speaking/listening, reading and writing. The CLBA is based on the benchmarks descriptors but testing for LINC is targeted from pre-Benchmark to Benchmark 4. Assessment for LINC programs is conducted through the Language Assessment, Referral and Counselling Service (LARCC) of the Edmonton Catholic Social Services. Following assessment, the learner is placed in an appropriate LINC class based on the lowest proficiency level identified.

Whether Settlement Renewal will bring about significant changes in the way LINC programs will be administered, structured and funded in Alberta is left to be seen. However, settlement renewal will have a direct influence on LINC programs in Edmonton. Meetings with personnel from CIC have indicated that LINC programs as

they administratively exist will be subject to change. An analysis of these programs is therefore very timely and will provide useful information for the future planning of any language instruction initiatives that will be set up for newcomers in Edmonton

Searching for a Method

My exploration for an appropriate methodology to gather the data that would allow me to analyze LINC programs in Edmonton and that would incorporate my own values while facilitating in-depth discussion with learners in LINC programs led to a literature search. I was influenced by writers such as Miles and Huberman (1984), Guba (1978), Spradley (1979), Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Spindler (1987) and Burgess (1985) among others who advocate for a more qualitative approach to research. I had also used a qualitative design for the study I did for my Master's program since it made sense to speak with the people whose voices were important to my study. I strongly felt that this method would be the ideal for my present study since it was important to hear the stories of learners in LINC programs in Edmonton. I suppose what my literature search did was provide reassurance for the choice I was about to make.

I noted the tremendous interest that has been shown over the past years in using more qualitative methods of research than quantitative approaches. There has been heated debate about which method results in clearer findings and leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. My belief is that it is not a matter of one method producing better results than the other. Rather, the consideration is what is more appropriate for the specific investigation being conducted. I chose to use a qualitative design for my present project because I felt it was more appropriate to the kind of enquiry I wanted to conduct. I wanted to speak with learners who would provide me with the data for my study. I wanted to hear their voices, see their facial expressions and really listen to what they had to say. I wanted to gain as much contextual information as possible since this is important to understanding the information which would be shared with me.

I noted the comments of Spindler (1987) with regard to qualitative research as an attempt to record and report about a phenomenon being studied within its social context. There is interest in social interaction and the ways in which environmental factors either restrain or facilitate such interaction. There is also the desire to give meaning to these interactions as they happen within their social context. Bodgan and Biklen (1982) are concerned with the context in which behaviours occur. Spindler (1987) again adds that within qualitative research, it is important to understand the sociocultural factors which affect the behaviour being studied.

My understanding of qualitative research is that it is concerned with who people are, how they behave and how they interact together. It aims to uncover their beliefs, values and perspectives from within the group and from the feelings and points of view of the group members. In this study it is the meanings and interpretations of the participants that count. Since the research problem I investigated focused on the involvement of adult participants in their own second language learning experiences in LINC programs, it was only fitting that I allowed the participants themselves to tell their stories. This approach provided data about their beliefs and attitudes and their feelings about LINC programs, information which would have been difficult to acquire in any other way. As Wiersma (1986) suggests, this approach is definitely more sensitive to context since it seeks to explore the issues of participants within their lived experiences.

At this stage, there was no concern about generalizability of the research results. Accurate descriptions of LINC programs were paramount. Rather than simply tabulate results, it was more important for me to understand the programs from the perspectives of the participants who attended them. I wanted them to share with me their ideas, feelings and beliefs about the programs and I wanted to determine what these meant. It was also important to explore their viewpoints on some of the issues, which arose. While experimentation researches traditionally involve a hypothesis formation, this study did not start off from the point of a hypothesis. There was the hope that such a hypothesis would emerge as the data collection took place and as I attempted to interpret the situation from the individuals who were interviewed. My preference was for the theory to emerge from the data.

All researchers operate from a certain paradigm – a basic set of beliefs which guides one's actions. Whatever paradigm the researcher operates from will make particular demands on him or her including how the research questions are formed and how the information is interpreted (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). My research design falls within a constructivist paradigm which uses the naturalistic procedure of allowing informants to describe and tell their stories and presenting the findings from a grounded theory perspective. As the researcher, it was not my intent to collect heaps of empirical materials and then easily deduce the findings. My interpretations would have to be constructed. I would have to create a framework to make sense out what was learned. The act of inquiry began with issues and concerns of participants and these unfolded as the study progressed.

The Argument for a Qualitative vs Quantitative Method

Quantitative techniques have dominated the social sciences and are the result of a logical, positivist philosophy during the development of industrial capitalism (Burgess, 1985). This philosophy, Burgess says, advocates for a search for universal laws through scientific enquiry. He finds that quantitative research methods, while recognizing qualitative techniques, still relegate these as subordinate methods which can hardly be used as research techniques in their own right. Guba (1978) points out the differences between qualitative and quantitative research by saying that the two operate from different paradigms. The researcher who is involved in a more quantitative kind of investigation sees the world as composed of variables - independent and dependent. Independent variables can be manipulated to determine their effects on the dependent variables. The qualitative researcher uses another paradigm - one that is concerned with describing the phenomenon to be studied. The researcher approaches the specific situation with an open mind and allows impressions to emerge.

Kruger (1988) clarifies qualitative investigations further by arguing that they concentrate on words and observations to express reality and attempt to describe people in natural situations. By contrast, he claims that quantitative approaches grow out of a

strong academic tradition that places trust in numbers that represent opinions or concepts. What quantitative researches focus on is the testing of a hypothesis with the objective of verification. Within qualitative research, the researcher sets out to discover. He/she will also look for verification but in a way in which relationships can be observed or explained by the participants themselves rather than arrange for this to happen under controlled conditions. In this light, Guba (1978) calls attention to the notion of quantitative researchers formulating preconceived ideas and theories about the field of interest. He suggests that researchers should approach their investigation with an open mind, allowing interpretations to be made of real events. Spindler (1987) who believes that hypotheses should emerge "in situ" as the information is gathered by the researcher, supports this argument. For him, there is the defining of the problem before the researcher embarks on the study but there is no predetermined hypothesis which the researcher needs to prove.

Spindler (1987), however, closes the qualitative/quantitative argument by pointing out that it is not a valid one. Some people seem to feel that qualitative research is in direct conflict with more statistically oriented research designs. Spindler disputes this notion. He is supported by Kruger (1988:39) who says that "increasingly, researchers are recognizing the benefits of combined qualitative and quantitative procedures resulting in greater methodological mixes that strengthen research design." Burgess (1985:279) sums up the qualitative/quantitative argument in his observation that evidence gathered through a qualitative methodology is not necessarily superior, more reliable or more valid. It is just different, providing another perspective derived from another kind of theoretical framework.

What Peshkin (1993) feels should happen is for researchers to make a judgment call to decide what research design would best fit the need of their investigation. In his article *The Goodness of Qualitative Research*, he suggests that the proof of the research conducted by whatever means lies in the outcome of its pudding. There needs to be the avoidance of an either-or polarization. Peshkin cites Bruner (1990), who warns that "such controversy is divisive, misleading and destructive" because while some researchers "seek generalizations, laws and causal relationships," others no less seek " a humanistic

understanding of the other cultures and the richness, complexity and ambiguity." I made the judgement call to use a qualitative design for my investigation.

I viewed my study as an exploratory journey - a journey of discovery. I was interested in what I would find along the way instead of what I would be proving or disproving at the end of it all. I was interested in what new discoveries would come to light or what new issues participants would raise particularly those that I had never even considered. I valued this method for the first hand information to which it would allow me access. Speaking with learners would let me see their perspective on the subject in a way in which I could not do with a questionnaire. Learners would be given the opportunity to produce their own accounts of their realities of LINC programs.

Human beings are very expressive people. Everyday we find people describing situations and events and explaining and evaluating their experiences to others. These accounts may be concerned with remedying a problem or providing an explanation for what is happening. Within this context, LINC participants would be allowed to do what naturally happens among people – to describe their situations and to ensure that these descriptions are understood.

I also felt that the use of a qualitative design would give me the flexibility to change strategy if things did not work out as planned. I also saw this piece of research as a challenge to my own pre-conceived concepts and perspectives that I had developed over the years. It is with these thoughts and feelings that I selected to do a qualitative design since I felt this was the best approach suited to the objective of the research project.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in terms of its small sample size. Based on the methodology used, it was only possible to interview seven learners out of a population of hundreds of LINC learners. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) note, there is no easy answer about the representativeness of sample sizes. They say that while a large sample makes us feel more confident about our results, it does not resolve the issue of representativeness since the population being studied is infinite and there is no way of

applying our findings to all the population in all circumstances. I also did not want to be swamped by too much information which would have proved too difficult to handle.

Because it was easier to interview learners with adequate communication skills, learners who were not competent in the language were excluded. Another factor of importance to mention is that six of the seven learners interviewed had some formal education and work experience prior to their arrival in Edmonton. The experiences, feelings and issues of these learners may have been different from other participants in LINC programs who come to the classroom with no previous schooling and are introduced to formal learning for the first time.

Researcher's Background Bias and Perspective

I think at this point it is really important to say who I am, what my biases are and what is my perspective on this project. I have been involved in the field of English as a Second Language for over seven years, first as a teacher and now as an administrator. I worked at a number of immigrant serving agencies including one private and three not for profit. I myself am an immigrant from Guyana in the Caribbean. I have not been a second language learner since English is my first language, having lived in a country colonized by the British in the early nineteenth century.

However, as an immigrant to Canada, I have experienced many difficulties living in a new culture, the same as many second language learners. I therefore have the tendency to empathize, sympathize and identify with learners. I see this as both a weakness and a strength. As a weakness, I may believe most of what I am told by learners about the negative experiences they have had within Canadian society since I have had a fair share of such negativism directed towards me. On the other hand, my similar experiences allow me to understand more fully some of the difficulties and problems new Canadians face thus allowing me to respond in very appropriate ways. In many instances when I say to learners, "I understand how that feels," it is not a just a polite response, but it is indeed expressing a real understanding of the difficulties learners may be facing.

I also have a leaning towards a more critical stance of adult education. I believe in education for change and for empowerment and see this as part of the role of adult ESL education. I agree with the notion that like traditional education, adult ESL is defined and conducted within a complex social and political context which frames its philosophy, ideology and practice. I also see no philosophical differences between adult education programs for mainstream Canadian adults and such programs for immigrant adults. My belief is that education can sometimes lead to the exclusion rather than inclusion of individuals or groups.

I also feel that it is most important for ESL learners to participate fully in shaping and designing their programs. Some practitioners whom I have encountered agree with this notion but their idea of participation is just peripheral. Within the literature, there is reference to centripetal or centrifugal participation of learners in the education process. Centripetal participation moves learners towards more intensive participation, getting involved and taking control of one's learning. Such participation results in learners being empowered. I see participation of learners in current LINC programs as being defined in more centrifugal terms, moving learners out on the periphery, preventing them from being involved in decision making and restraining their active involvement in their education process, thus disempowering them.

I view adult learning as either empowering or disempowering. (It is difficult for me to consider the "grey areas"). Learning either has to facilitate or hinder the participation of learners in their society.

Gathering the Data through Interviews

The data for this study was obtained primarily by interviewing learners who have participated in LINC programs in Edmonton, although, I also used the data recorded in my field notes over the past five years. According to the literature reviewed, interviews can be used as the sole means of gathering data in the qualitative research or they can be used in conjunction with other techniques (Burgess, 1992; Dobbert 1992 and Cohen and Manion, 1994). I found the interview a good way of gathering descriptive data in the

words of the participants so that I could gain insight into how they were interpreting the programs they had attended.

Spradley (1979) sees the interview as a series of friendly conversations. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) also allude to the conversation idea of the interview but claim that it is "purposeful conversation." Spradley suggests that the interview involves two major processes - developing rapport with informants and eliciting information from them. Of course, many interviews start off with feelings of apprehension both on the part of the researcher and the interviewee. I found that it was really important to establish some form of trust, to relax the respondent and to put him or her at ease during the interview process. It was also important that when the person began to talk, I listen and show interest. According to Spradley, this communicates acceptance of the person and helps to develop trust. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) note that the element of trust between researcher and respondent is a deciding factor of how much will be disclosed during the interview.

Interviewing requires careful planning, much patience and considerable practice if the result is to be useful. A good deal of thought and preparation has to go into the interview process. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggest that it is not really necessary to decide beforehand the exact questions which need to be asked. Their preference is for a list of issues to be explored since they feel that exact questions become too restrictive pushing the researcher into a single mode of questioning. However, in my situation, I had to think about the questions to be devised and how these could be piloted. Because I would be conversing with second language learners who may not have been entirely proficient in English, I had to focus on the language to be used so that the respondents would be able to interpret the questions. One serious consideration was wording the questions as simply as possible so that respondents would be able to understand. In this respect, I pilot tested the questions with other ESL learners before I did the actual interviews. For the pilot testing, I chose learners who were currently in the LINC level 2 and 3 classes in two different programs since I felt that if these learners could understand, then it was possible that the respondents who had completed LINC programs would find no difficulty with interpreting the questions. I know that this assumption is not always true since many learners complete LINC classes not because

they have attained the exit level proficiency, but in many instances, because they have exhausted the 1000 hours of instruction allocated them. However, I felt that pilot testing the questions before the actual interviews would allow me to do some initial trouble shooting and help me to adjust to the variations respondents would offer in their answers.

Within my pilot testing, I tried to work out the best order in which to ask my questions. I thought that the order might be important in establishing rapport with respondents. Patton (1983) suggests that questions addressing the same topic or leading towards the same idea should be grouped together. Patton also feels that demographic questions such as age, place of residence and educational level should be spread out through the interview or placed at the end because they are less interesting kinds of questions. Patton admits that some investigators claim that it is better to start with demographic questions because they are readily addressed and ease the respondents into more difficult situations. Le Compte and Preissle (1993) believe that the more complex or controversial questions should be asked in the middle or latter part of the interview when rapport has been established and the respondent's interest has been aroused.

With this project, I found that it was better to start with the demographic questions which acted more as an ice-breaker. Respondents were ready to talk about where they live and which bus they had taken to get to the interview site, how many children they had and where they were working. Having made this kind of small talk it was easier to move on to the more focused questions which directly related to LINC programs they had attended. Although I had spent some time ordering and re-ordering the questions during the pilot, the order I had selected did not work during the actual interviews. For example, my first question was asking respondents to describe a day in one of their LINC classes. As respondents became involved in telling their stories, it was more important to follow up on ideas and issues respondents raised during their reflections. It was important to pin down important pieces of information and not lose track of these. The interview questions I had constructed became just a guide so that I did not forget the areas of focus but respondents took a lead role in helping me to clarify and explore some of the issues I had in mind.

The literature on qualitative research classifies the interview into three broad groups - the standardized, the unstandardized and the semi-standardized. Within the standardized interview, there are specific questions with very specific wordings to which the researcher must stick. With the unstandardized interview, the researcher has the freedom to develop each question according to what is considered most important. The interviewer does not channel discussions into very specific directions but tries to create an atmosphere in which the respondent will feel free to provide information without being sanctioned. In the semi-standardized interview, the researcher may have to ask a number of specific or major questions but is free to probe beyond these questions if such digression is seen as necessary (Phillips, 1971). This is where my interviewing model fitted best. Although I did have specific questions for which I wanted answers, it was more important to probe and elicit as much information as possible on leads provided by respondents.

My questions were open ended and allowed respondents to relate and describe situations. For example, one question I asked was, "Can you describe a typical activity in your LINC class? Tell me about some of the field trips you went on and how did these happen?" But even within the answers to these more open ended questions, depending on what clarifications or details I needed, more structured questions were used to follow-up. Researchers are often warned to avoid the use of leading questions but these can be extremely useful at different points of the interview. Again, for example, as the respondent was describing an activity done in her class in the mornings, she said this particular activity was too boring. My response with some leading questions was why did she consider this activity boring? What would she have liked to be done differently? Why?

Le Compte and Preissle (1993) suggest, interviews can vary in the degree to which they are structured or unstructured. Although the questions for the interview can be labelled open ended, they focus on particular topics and may be guided by some more specific questions. I found that there was considerable latitude to pursue a range of issues and allow the respondents to shape the content of the interview. Using this

technique, I explored new ideas and had the laxity of changing the line of questioning if information was not forthcoming and adapting whatever approach seemed to be more fruitful. Phillips (1991) claims that this type of interview possesses real advantage in revealing conceptual biases and lack of insight. I was able to match the knowledge from my field notes with that gained from respondents.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) point out that the type of interview done is greatly dependent on the nature of the topic being addressed and what exactly the researcher is trying to investigate. As Schatzman and Strauss (1973:83) declare, there are no cookbook recipes for interviewing. Besides focussing on the types of interviews to be conducted, they identify some other considerations such as the duration of the interview, the interview setting and the identities of the informants.

Duration of the Interview

To plan for an interview, the researcher has to know the expected duration - will the interview last only for a few minutes, an hour or a few hours? Interviews of short duration can limit one not only in the area which can be covered, but also in the tactics which the interviewer can use - including allowing for exploration or digression and the exchanging of views to obtain additional information. Interviews of longer duration allow the respondent to ease slowly and sociably into the crux of the interview. There is the time to feel each other out particularly if the researcher and respondent are not acquainted. If an interview session for one reason or another has to be short, then several sessions can be negotiated (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973).

The initial interviews for this project were about two hours each in duration. I presumed that two hours would give me a lot of information, granted that I would have to spend some of that time trying to put the respondents at ease. Also, since respondents were second language learners, I did not want to spend too long a block of time involving them in discourse which was too taxing. However, at the end of each interview, I bargained with respondents about either meeting with them for a short while a second time or calling them on the telephone if there were further clarifications I needed as I

transcribed the interviews. No one refused and I did spend additional time with each of the seven respondents doing a quick second round of questions for clarification. This was very useful and I counted myself very fortunate that this avenue was open to me.

All the interviews were tape-recorded but I also made notes during the sessions. I felt it was important to record the facial expressions, gestures or the way ideas were emphasized or dismissed by respondents. I also kept notes on my personal feelings and my own reflections on the interviews.

Interview Setting

The setting for the interview is very important. I had to decide: Will it be the school's crowded cafeteria, a classroom, the office, where? The location of the interview can affect how much respondents will say. For example, asking learners questions about their teacher in the classroom may bring different results from asking learners the same question at a coffee shop two blocks away.

Krueger (1988) agrees with the importance of the interview setting. My experience was that whose territory is used could make a big difference to the way the interview goes. When I pilot tested the interview questions, some learners suggested that I do this in my office. The first interview turned out to be a tragedy. My "Do not Disturb" sign was ignored by some of my staff who felt that their issues were more urgent than what I was doing. Although I asked the switchboard to keep my telephone calls on hold, I was constantly disturbed by calls, which were deemed to be urgent. Besides this, I found that in the office setting, learners still perceived me as the administrator and it was difficult to separate my roles as the "boss" and as the researcher. There was much reluctance on the part of learners to discuss their classes freely. Although I had gone to the trouble of explaining the purpose of my research, I distinctly got the impression learners felt that I was evaluating the program and their teachers and they were very careful with their comments.

My strategy was to interview the respondents for the study either on their own territory or on territory that could be considered neutral. I let them choose. Three of the

interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes, one in a classroom at the agency where I work, one in the respondent's office space and two at the coffee shop. I also found that the respondents' styles were crucial to how much information was forthcoming. Whether the learner was bold, shy or retiring helped to determine the content and style of the interview. The degree of commitment of the learners was also an important consideration to the outcome of the interview. There were varying degrees of interest in different issues.

I found all the respondents willing and enthusiastic to share their experiences but some were more enthusiastic than others. For instance, as I will later discuss, one of the respondents made the offer to be interviewed for the study instead of that request coming from me. She was very motivated and bubbling over with stories she wanted to share. She had a real ownership in wanting to see LINC programs actually work for newcomers. The information I was able to gather from her was really intense, very focused and of course very emotional. Spradley (1979) defines a "good" respondent as one who has the experience of the particular issue being investigated. He also suggests that those people who are willing to contribute their time should be given consideration.

I should also state here that I have noted the literature pointing to the interview as a transaction which will inevitably have biases, therefore, such biases have to be recognized and controlled. The kind and degree of distortion that the respondents introduce consciously or unconsciously are significant for interview situations in general. Interviewing techniques will have to centre on creating the kind of atmosphere that will minimize the respondent's need to distort his or her information. One of the techniques I used to get respondents to examine their bias was to flush out opinions and assumptions as thoroughly as possible by asking respondents to cite concrete examples. One example that readily comes to mind was when a respondent said that he found teachers favouring European students over other learners. I first asked for clarification of what exactly this statement meant, what was his definition of favour and I followed up by asking him to describe some situations where favour was evidenced. I also took the trouble to find out if this was his individual opinion. I was ever watchful of ways to minimize the degree of bias that would infiltrate my data.

Choosing the Informants

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that within the qualitative design, it is better to work with small samples of people nested in their context and studied in-depth (p. 58). Woods (1986) agrees with this suggestion and further explicates that the more respondents constitute a cross-section of the population in question, the easier it is to avoid bias. To this end, the sample for this study was not homogenous but consisted of several sub-populations. Rather than select randomly from the entire population of LINC learners in Edmonton, I divided this population into six sub-populations or strata represented by the respondents whom I intended to interview. My intention was to select from each stratum at random. I set out my guidelines as follows:

- The entire sample population would consist of all adult immigrant learners in Edmonton who have completed 1000 hours of instruction in LINC programs. (In Edmonton, 1000 hours are the maximum instructional hours for LINC learners, except those labelled literacy learners. They are allowed to take an additional 200 hours).
- Six nationalities which represent the largest group of immigrants accessing LINC programs during the last three years would form the different sub-groups or strata. These nationalities would be determined by statistical data obtained from the Language Assessment Referral and Counseling Centre (LARCC) of Catholic Social Services. (All new immigrants desirous of taking LINC classes have to be tested and referred to appropriate programs through LARCC).
- Names of students who have completed 1000 hours of LINC would be written and placed under the selected six nationalities of the largest groups of immigrants accessing LINC programs in Edmonton. Names according to nationalities would be placed in a bag and two handpicked from each category, one for the actual study and the other as a back up should the first not be an appropriate choice for one reason or another. For example, a person who has completed 1000 hours of LINC would not necessarily be

able to communicate clearly and since my intention was not to use interpreters, I would not consider interviewing such a learner. However, as I will later explain, I discovered that this approach was easier to conceptualize than to actually carry out.

Gaining Access

Negotiating access is not just about getting into the group being studied but sometimes proceeding across several thresholds that lead the way to the informants themselves. With this study, I did not have to look too far. In a sense, since I work in the area of ESL, I am very close to the informants, but changing my role to researcher certainly entailed going through some of the steps. I realized that it was important to build trust with those who would lead me to the respondents. I had to do this in the early stage of gathering my data. It was also important to project myself as a person of worth and integrity. The pathways of information are opened by trust since people need to feel confident that their own interests and identities are safeguarded.

All organizations and official agencies have members who assume responsibility for protecting their activities from unwanted intrusion by outsiders. It was important to negotiate with these gatekeepers to gain access to the informants. I began by approaching the persons I visualized as the gatekeepers at a few ESL serving agencies/institutions. I explained my study in detail and requested their assistance in providing me with the names of learners who had completed 1000 hours of LINC classes. I needed lists which included the learners' nationalities and telephone numbers. I was able to obtain this information from one non-profit, one public and one private institution. I then identified my informants through the sampling process previously described. The first informant was contacted via the telephone. I explained in great detail what I was doing and asked whether she would agree to participate in the study. She consented and we set up an initial meeting at her place. At this meeting, I explained the research objectives and reassured her that the study would in no way be a threat to her. I also made it quite clear

that she would be free to withdraw at any time she chose to. We agreed on another time for me to conduct the interview.

During the first interview, I discovered that it was difficult to solicit information from this respondent. Although I had met with her once before, she seemed to be suspicious and reluctant to share information with me. She explained that she really did not know me and did not fully understand why I had singled her out as an informant. I pointed out that she had agreed to do this but she seemed concerned that she had made this choice. I let her know that she had no obligation to go through with the interview. She did not want to quit but at the same time, she was not very open in our conversation. Her answers to my questions were very short and stilted and even though I tried hard to probe at some of the important issues, she was not prepared to disclose very much. I found the same trend with the second interviewee. I thought of Spradley (1979) who said that a good informant is one who has the experience and the information. In this case, I felt that a good informant was one who was willing to **talk** about that experience and share that information.

I reflected on the many instances when university students had visited my ESL classes to do surveys and interviews for different projects. Even though I would prepare my learners for meeting with these students they would still enquire if the students were working for Canada Immigration, the police department or Alberta Family and Social Services. They had the tendency of being suspicious of strangers who asked too many questions. I wondered how I would overcome this difficulty I was encountering. Then, something happened which made me change my entire strategy.

On my way from work one afternoon, I bumped into a colleague who enquired how my research was progressing. I told her that I was still at the interview stage. She was very excited about what I was doing and immediately recommended some students whom I could interview. My response to this was that it was not ethical that she should know who my respondents were, so she devised a plan. She called a number of learners she had known in different LINC programs and told them about my study. To those who were willing to participate, she explained that I would be in touch with one of them to arrange an interview. She gave me the names of those learners and I made a note of their

nationalities and telephone numbers. I randomly chose a name from one of the nationalities on my list and proceeded to ask her to participate in my study. I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my call, not forgetting to mention that this teacher had recommended that I talk with her. She sounded very excited and expressed her willingness to meet with me.

We had a very long, interesting and fruitful discussion. When I asked this particular learner why she was so willing to talk with me, her response was that, "Teacher X told me that she has known you for a long time and that it was O.K. for me to share my experiences with you." This was an eye opener and I thought that this was the way I would have to proceed if I wanted to have some real solid information. My impression was that I was a total stranger to the people I was interviewing and it would be difficult to get them to open up. I had to find a middle person who knew the learners to pave the way for their acceptance of me. I therefore used this method for identifying the remainder of my informants. I suppose that this is a very good example of the trust factor between researcher and respondent that the literature on qualitative research alludes to so often. I now fully understand what writers were referring to when they said that the crux of a good interview lies in the forming of relationships.

I had originally planned to interview six participants. However, a seventh learner who had heard about my study through one of the interviewees approached me. She was determined to tell me her stories. She knew a colleague of mine and used him to make the initial contact. She was very thrilled when I called her and consented to have her talk with me. I remember our first conversation when she exclaimed, "I want to talk about my experience. It is important for people like you to hear and to change some of the ways ESL is taught. If through my talk I can do good for others, then I should take this chance." My interview with her was very informative and rewarding. She was open and willing to let me be a part of her experience. Ever vigilant, I was on the lookout for her bias but she was able to explain issues very consistently. The main reason for her wanting to share her information with me, as I learnt through our discourse, was to help bring about positive changes in LINC programs. I was rewarded with rich and relevant data both times I spoke with her.

As I came to the end of my interviews, I was somewhat concerned that my well thought out sampling process had eventually gone down the drain but then I discovered that this was the first hand experience of Le Compte and Preissle (1993). They found that researchers involved in qualitative studies do not necessarily go about their sampling process in a way that can always be handled conceptually and logistically (p. 65). They suggest that one's method of selecting his/her respondent can be based on identified needs which may arise as the study progresses. From their viewpoint, the researcher needs the laxity of changing the way he/she selects the sample which could become an ad hoc procedure rather than a priori parameter of research design (p. 66).

Burgess (1992), commenting on this issue, says that one of the key ways in which qualitative research differs from quantitative is the leeway one needs to have with regard to the sampling procedure. He suggests that there has to be a strategy for sampling that is flexible so that the researcher can change direction if needs be. I also took consolation from Miles and Huberman (1984:36) who say that, "Very seldom does a start-up sampling frame survive the imperfection and intractability of the field. It must be bent and reframed."

Ethical Considerations

Informants providing data for any study have the right to privacy. The identity of the participants in an investigation has to be divorced as fully and effectively as possible from the information they furnish (Wiersma, 1986). A promise of complete anonymity was given to respondents interviewed in this study. Also, ethical practice in research utilizing informants requires the researcher to obtain informed oral or written consent. For this study, oral consent of participants was given and this was tape-recorded. The consent agreement was given after learners had:

- accurate, understandable explanation of the nature and purpose of the research
- an explanation of how and why they were selected to participate

- an explanation of the possible use to which the data would be put
- reassurance to answer any questions concerning the study
- assurance that they were completely free to decline or to withdraw their consent and to discontinue to participate at any time without any prejudice or sanctions against them

The tape-recorded and transcribed data was stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office to prevent accidental disclosure. I also tried to ensure that I did not carelessly discuss any raw data which was in my possession. Field notes were also protected for confidentiality. In presenting the data and doing the data analysis all respondents have been referred to through the use of pseudonyms. After the completion of the study, the tapes will be destroyed.

Before I began my data collection, I filed an Ethical Review Application with the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta and received approval from the Ethics Review Committee.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Who were the Respondents

Before attempting to present what learners had to say about LINC programs in Edmonton, I think it is important for these learners to be introduced to readers so that they can have a clearer picture of who these people are. It will be difficult to comprehend the nature and scope of this project without some understanding of the learners who were the participants. Although learners could be globally perceived as a group of people involved in language learning, they are all individuals who bring unique experiences and knowledge bases to Canada and indeed to LINC programs. In order to give a more descriptive picture of the categories of learners that represent the population of LINC learners, I will allow the seven learners who were involved in this study to introduce themselves.

Hoang from Vietnam

My name is Hoang. I came to Canada six years ago from South Vietnam. In Vietnam, I was a teacher but after I had my third son, I stopped working to take care of my family. My husband worked in a Government office. He completed high school in Vietnam and after obtaining a job as a clerk, worked his way up to becoming a supervisor.

We had our own home in a large village in Vietnam called Tan Phu. It was a four-bedroom house and it was very comfortable but we had to leave Vietnam because of the economic conditions after the war. Life was very difficult. The money my husband was making couldn't sustain the family. There were also too many crimes happening. We felt compelled to make a better living for our children so my husband joined with other men coming to Canada as refugees on the boat. I was very scared for my husband but everyone said that Canada was a good country and we can find a better life. My husband

came to Canada four years before me. He had to wait a long time to get his landed papers. He faced many, many problems that I do not want to talk about at this time. When he arrived in Canada, he couldn't find a job, but after about six months, he started to work as a cook in a Vietnamese restaurant. He had to send money back to support us.

When I came to Canada, my husband became very ill. I think he was working too hard. In Canada, because you cannot find a good job to make enough money, you have to work at more than one job or work long hours. Before I was here, he was always sick but couldn't stop working because we would not have been able to support ourselves in Vietnam. It was not only my own family I had to think of. I had two sisters and one brother who were facing the same problems. My brother was not as lucky as my husband to get on the boat so I helped them with whatever little money my husband was able to send for me. This is how it is in Vietnam. We take care of all our family. It doesn't matter if they are married or not.

In Canada, I had to start working immediately to help my husband. He was always tired. I felt very sorry for him. I wondered if it was a mistake for us to come to Canada. I prayed every night that we would be able to make a living but I wished that I could find a better job. I did not know any English so I had to take a job where I would not have to speak with Canadians. I got a job working in the kitchen of the same restaurant where my husband was working. My sons started learning English to continue their schooling. I could not take the time to learn English because I was working twelve hours every day except Sundays.

After one year, my husband passed away. Life was very hard. I worked and worked. My eldest son managed to get in to a program at NAIT and now he works as an electrician. The second son is also part-time at NAIT and works at a store. The youngest is in Grade 12. When my eldest son started bringing in an income, I decided to work part-time and learn English. I went to three different schools in three different LINC programs. My hours of LINC are done. It was not sufficient for me to learn English so that I can speak and understand very well. I still want to learn more English. I would like to get a better job but I can't if I am not fluent in English. The restaurant job is very hard work. In the nights when I get home, I am sore from bending and carrying heavy things

around. I would like to take computer classes so that I can work in an office but maybe by the time I learn computers I will be too old and no one would hire me! Still, it is my dream.

Martina from Poland

My name is Martina and I came from Poland four years ago. I am married and I have one daughter. My husband is working in the field of computer programming after graduating from NAIT. Both my husband and I were professionals in Poland. I graduated with a Master's Degree in psychology from a university in Warsaw and I worked with the Department of Health. I learnt some English at university but I forgot most of what I learnt because I did not have the opportunity to use the language in Poland.

After being in Canada for one year, I started attending LINC classes. I was tested and placed in a Level 1 class which I found too easy. I then moved on to the Level 2 and then finally the Level 3 class. I attended these LINC classes at two different schools. After LINC, I went to ESL classes at Grant Mac Ewan Community College. There I wrote the TOEFL examination and was successful. I then enrolled in the Social Work program at Grant MacEwan and am at present completing my practicum for this program. I hope that I will be able to find a job in keeping with my skills when I graduate.

I know that I am very lucky that I was able to reach so far in my studies. I have many friends who are still struggling after being in Canada for many years. I am really happy that my husband was able to get a fairly good job because I see the trend with many immigrants. They have to do all the hard jobs. I am also glad that the government paid for my English classes or else I couldn't afford to do this on my own. I think that LINC classes are a big benefit to newcomers when they arrive in Canada. The only thing is that sometimes they are not run properly by the schools and students do not get the full benefit from them.

I would like to be happy in Canada as I was in Poland. I know it is difficult to fit in to a new culture but I will always try my best to do so. I would like Canadians to give me a chance to go on with my life. I would like them to accept me. All Canadians are

supposed to be immigrants from other countries who came here years ago but sometimes people forget this. Now, they look down on immigrants and they do not want to give them a chance. I would not like to be a burden on the Canadian government. I want to work hard and to give my daughter a better life she would have had in Poland. Both my husband and I would like to continue our studies and to go as far as we can.

Chi from China

I am Chi and I am from China. I came to Canada almost seven years ago. My brother who came to Canada from Hong Kong sponsored my family. I have one daughter. My husband died two years ago in a car accident when we were visiting relatives in New York. Now I am alone and my English is not very good. When my husband was here with me, I used to depend on him quite a lot. He helped me with everything. He took care of my daughter and I. I am scared to do things by myself. I wish that I had learnt some more independence so that I would find it easier to cope.

In China, I worked as a Secretary but here in Canada I never worked because my husband had a good job and was able to support us. I had no English skills, so I knew it would be difficult to find a good job. I did not want to work as a cook or a cleaner. But since my husband died, I have had to change my thinking. I am now on my own and I have to find work to support myself and daughter. My first step was to start learning English.

For the past two years, I have attended LINC programs at two different locations. I went to part-time programs because I was looking for work. My brother tried to help me by giving me a small job in one of his businesses. I feel that I should try to find work on my own and not be a burden to my brother. I have some money from my husband's insurance and would like to open a small business. I am very nervous because even after completing eight hundred hours of LINC classes, I still feel that my English is not good enough. Also, there are many things about life in Canada that I do not know. Sometimes it feels very scary. When I was coming to Canada, I thought of how good life would be but it hasn't worked out that way. Sometimes I feel like returning to China where I will be

"safe" but my daughter doesn't want to go back. Canada is now her home. I am hoping to take classes on how to open a small business. I wish I can do this soon so that I can try to make a living for myself.

I have many friends here in Canada and I am very thankful for this. My friends understand my problems and they give me a lot of help. Not all people understand that when you are new to this country that life is not very easy. You may have more food and clothing and you can have some of the things you never had in your own country, but there are still many problems with beginning a new life. You have to start all over again. It is like when you uproot a tree that is already old and try to plant it in some other part of your yard. It is difficult for the tree to take root again. This is how I feel. It is even worse because my husband is not with me. I have told myself that I cannot give up. Life has to go on and I have to make the best of it. If I can learn some more English so that I can understand the rules and regulations for running a business, I think I will be able to progress. The English I learnt was not enough and it was too much about everyday talk. I have to go beyond this and I will. I am trying to find another ESL program which will give me the help I need.

Lee from Hong Kong

I am Lee and I am originally from Hong Kong. I have been in Canada for three years and I have attended LINC classes at three different locations. I left Hong Kong because everyone is nervous about the take-over of Hong Kong by China. Hong Kong is a very progressive country. Many people are well-to-do and enjoy a high standard of living. I am scared that when China takes over, things will be different. China has the communist influence and this is not good for a country like Hong Kong. Many people from Hong Kong are trying to migrate to Canada. It is not too difficult if you have the money. Many people from Hong Kong encouraged me to come here because they feel that life in Canada is good.

My friend and I are trying to open a business but this can be somewhat difficult because my English is not good. I have to learn the language and many other things

about the country. Many of these things I have to learn from my friends because when I go to ESL classes there is not sufficient information from the teachers. I began LINC classes at the basic level and then I moved on and finally graduated from Level 3 LINC. I took a long time to learn because I am old - forty-six years and I do not have a very sound education. I think that people learn English faster if they went to college or university. I could see this when I was in the class. Some students were always behind because they did not have sufficient education before.

In Hong Kong, I was only able to complete high school and then I started working in my father's business. I was still very young. I learnt from my father. He was my best teacher - very practical. I wish my teachers here in Canada were sometimes that way. It is easier to learn from the practical. I did very well in my father's business. It is only because of this fear with China that I came to Canada. But I am very optimistic. When people don't know the language in a new country it's difficult to be independent but I rely on my friends. There is quite a large group of people from Hong Kong here in Edmonton.

My wife, son and daughter are here with me in Canada. My wife is also learning English because I would need her help if I am to start my own business. My wife does not have a formal education so she is a bit slow in becoming fluent in English but she is very willing to learn anything that will help us to be progressive in Canada. We would like to be independent as we were in Hong Kong. I have a future planned for us. I believe that we have to know what we want out of life. Without planning, you cannot move forward. You take two steps forward and then two sideways so you have to sit and think about what direction you want to take.

We support each other as a family and for me, that is very important. I believe in family life and a family working together. I know that my children sometimes say to me that when they get a little older, they would like to move out on their own. They say their Canadian friends are doing this. I sometimes have a problem with my kids when they want to do things that are different from the Chinese culture. I know I have to be more open and accepting of Canadian culture because my kids are growing up here and I have to give them the chance to change as they see fit. But it is hard on both myself and my

wife to let go. We will have to deal with some of these changes gradually but I hope that some day everything will fit together as best as possible.

Samia from Lebanon

I am Samia and I am from Lebanon. I have been in Canada now for the past four years. I am married and I have one daughter. I work with children in a day care centre but I have a university degree from my country of origin. I worked there as an Accountant. I have tried to get a job as an Accountant here but no one would hire me. Employers say that I need a Canadian certificate and Canadian experience.

During my first year in Canada I became pregnant. I was always sick so I couldn't go to school to learn English. I was very nervous being in a new country and dealing with a new culture. Life here is somewhat different.

When my baby was three months old, I enrolled in a full-time LINC program but I quit after two sessions because the day care for the children was not very good. There were too many kids and the place was very dirty. Later, I went to a part-time program. After I completed my eight hundred hours of LINC, I went to a job search program. I was able to get the job I now have.

I would still like to be an Accountant because that is what I like doing but I don't know what is the possibility of following my dreams. I need more than LINC classes to help me to communicate well in English so that I can go to Grant MacEwan College or to NAIT. I feel that it is so unfair to have a university degree and not to be given any credit for it in Canada.

I work five days a week full-time so it is hard for me to go to school again. I cannot afford to stop working. My husband does not make sufficient money to take care of all the needs of the home. In Lebanon, my husband would say that it is not important for me to work, but here in Canada, it is not the same. If two people do not work, then it is difficult to maintain a home. We would also like to have another child, so we have to think about this also.

I am happy in Canada. I do not regret that I came. I just wish that life was a bit easier. I know that in life we have to make many sacrifices to get where we want to go. In Canada, there are a lot of services for people. There is also a lot of freedom that people do not enjoy in other countries.

Francesca from El Salvador

I am Francesca and I am originally from El Salvador. I came to Canada five years ago. My husband and I were having problems so we became divorced. My mother sponsored me and I came with my three kids. We lived in a small apartment. My mother worked as a cleaner and I had to also look for a job. I never worked in my life (except housework and farmwork) in El Salvador. I went up to elementary school and after that I used to help my father in his fruit business until I was nineteen when I got married.

My husband was a labourer and he made just enough money to support the family. We barely survived. There was no "real" job for me because I did not have a sound education and jobs were not easily available. Sometimes when I had the time, I would still go back to help my father and instead of paying me a wage, he would buy my groceries. After he died, my mother migrated to Canada and when she became a Canadian citizen, she sponsored me.

I was very excited to come to Canada. I knew many people were leaving El Salvador for a better life in Canada. I saw many people coming back to the village with new clothes and lots of money. They said that life was good in Canada – much better than El Salvador. I couldn't wait to get here. I was tired of living poor. On my arrival in Canada, I learnt that I would have to find a job because it was impossible for my mother to take care of myself and children. But I had to learn English first. However, finding a job was hard for me because I had no work experience. I found a part-time job cleaning in an Italian restaurant. One year later, I did this job and started taking part-time LINC classes. I worked in the evenings and went to classes during the day. It was very difficult - working, learning English and taking care of three children. It was also difficult for my

Mom. She had to work part-time also to help me with the kids but between us we managed.

My LINC classes helped me but they were not enough. Later I was told about Student Finance Board programs that I could access. I went full-time to one of these to see if I could find a better job. I went to a factory for work experience but until now I have not found a full-time job. I have gone back to cleaning at the Italian restaurant but I am still hopeful that I will find a full-time job with better pay. I cannot continue to be a burden on my Mom.

Avana from Bosnia

I am Avana and I am from Bosnia. I came to Canada eighteen months ago because of the war between the Serbs and Croatians. People were just killing each other left, right and centre. We had built our house four years before but everything we owned was destroyed by a bomb in a matter of seconds. I have one daughter and I thought that I should flee this war-torn situation to protect her.

I spent two years in a refugee camp before coming to Canada. Life was very difficult. It was a great change from the life we knew. We faced severe hardships that I had never dreamt about. There was never sufficient food and even drinking water was scarce. I thought that my daughter would die from the unhygenic conditions under which we lived. I never knew that the war in Bosnia would change my life forever.

I was educated at the University of Sarajevo in Economics. I then worked as an Economist in a government department. My husband also worked with the government as a Construction Engineer. He learnt English while in the refugee camp and he's been very lucky to have a job as an engineer here with the city of Edmonton. My English was poor so I went to full-time LINC classes.

I started in a low level 2 LINC class and after three months moved to level 3. I only attended one LINC program. After level 3, my teachers advised me to try the TOEFL preparation classes. I am now working on writing the TOEFL examination on my own. I would like to work at my own pace. I do not want anyone to push me. My husband helps

me with the questions which I do not understand. I know that I will be unable to have a job as an Economist here in Canada but I can change my career. I do not mind. However, I do not want to work as a cleaner or cook or waitress or some other jobs like these as I see many immigrant people are doing. I feel that I have too much talent to waste on these low skilled jobs. I would like to work with people, particularly immigrants because I think they need a lot of help when they come here. If my family and I did not have people to help us along the way, life would have been much more stressful. I would like to do the same for someone else.

Now that you have met the respondents, I will attempt to present the data I gathered from them as accurately as possible. Because these were ESL learners, their sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary and other usage of the language were not always correct. However, I made very few changes as to how things were said to me since I feel it is important to present the information in the same way events were described to me.

One very common characteristic I found among all of the respondents was their tendency to speak in the plural form, using the pronoun "we" instead of "I." To my enquiry of why they were constantly speaking of "we," they explained that the views they were expressing were representative of other learners. As I indeed discovered through this project, much of what goes on in ESL classes forms the basis for lengthy and serious discussions among learners. These discussions take place during the coffee breaks, as learners travel to and from their classes on the buses or when they are home in the evenings "chitchatting" on the telephone. They keep in touch with each other and exchange and share feelings on issues of importance which arise in classes. Sharing out of the classroom takes place primarily in language groups which are similar. For example, Vietnamese learners will call their fellow Vietnamese from the class or so would Chinese or Polish students. Sharing in multi-lingual groups takes place during classes or class breaks.

Coding the Data

I found coding the data a more complicated task than I had anticipated. After I completed the transcription of my first two interviews, I pored over my written tape recordings to consider some of the main themes, issues, problems and questions. I felt that this reflection was very important after each interview since I did not want to become lost in the heaps of information I was collecting. The next step was looking at the codes or categories. From reviewing the data several times, categories began to formulate in my mind so I created a start list of codes. I wrote these down and gave each a colour. For example, a category that had to do with teacher/learner relationship I colour coded blue or another on participation in classroom activities, I colour coded green. The codes were just descriptive without any interpretation. All I was trying to do was put a name to a segment of text. I started out with nineteen codes and of course not sufficient colours to identify these. However, as I progressed with examining the data over and over again, I was able to merge categories.

As I went through my transcribed data, I also did the same process with my field notes. I was not a very meticulous note-taker. I waded through some of my hasty scribbled words, phrases and some of the more lengthy descriptions I was able to make of important events. I had dated my notes and some of these were as old as four years. My more detailed notes were very useful, providing very concrete situations and even long quotations of what people had said. While I was taking these notes, I knew that I did not want to lose any vital information. I integrated my field notes with my transcribed data as a part of my coding and categorizing process.

I know that Glaser (1978) suggests that coding the data should be done when all the information has been gathered but I had learnt from previous research experience that handling too much data at the same time can be detrimental. I found it easier and more manageable to work with smaller chunks of data and then tie these together into the larger picture. Examining all the data at the same time can become overwhelmning and the researcher is left to flounder. Also, beginning to classify the data earlier just after the first two interviews were completed, presented the opportunity to shift and change categories

as new data emerged. I feel it is a given within the qualitative research that categories will change as new data is examined. For Miles and Huberman (1984) codes continue to emerge and evolve during the actual data collection.

After constant review and reflection on the various categories that I had formulated, I began tying different pieces of data together and writing conceptual summaries of the data to myself in the form of memos. These memos served to put an end to my constant drifting through the data. Writing the memos made me stop and think so that I could start some preliminary analysis of the data. I tried to clarify ideas which were forming in my mind. I carried on an endless internal dialogue asking numerous questions and trying to find answers. My memos were initially just a few short sentences but later grew into paragraphs and pages. There were some initial ideas which I underscored at the beginning of my data collection but they sometimes went nowhere and had to be abandoned. However, my memos helped me to move from simply reading through the data to the framework for doing my analysis.

In the end, I finally categorized all the data I had gathered into four major themes and nine sub-themes. The major themes form the wider categories into which the data can be encapsulated while the sub-themes provide the scope for the identification of more specific categories and the possibility of linking themes together. The data will be presented under the themes and sub-themes as follows:

Learners' Involvement in LINC Programs

- Planning Learning Experiences
- Questioning

Teachers within LINC Programs

- Characteristics of Teachers
- Teacher/Learner Relationship

Activities in LINC Programs

- Content
- Using Learners' Experiences

Teaching Strategies

Learners' Integration into Canadian Society

- Self-concept
- Employment Opportunities

Learners Involvement in LINC Programs

Planning Learning Experiences

In discussing their participation in planning for LINC programs, learners interviewed for this project explained that on the first day of classes they are presented the opportunity to pinpoint areas of the language that they are interested in covering. One learner indicated, "The first day we went to class, the teacher asked us what we wanted to learn and we told her about spelling, grammar and pronunciation." Another said, "Everytime at the beginning of the class, the teacher asks us what we want to learn." A third went on to explain, "The first day we went to class, the teacher asked us why we came to class and what we wanted to learn." It was also pointed out, "Sometimes on the first day the teacher has a schedule and she asks the students if this is O.K. or did they want to change something, like did they want to spend more time speaking than doing grammar."

However, when teachers ask learners on the first day of class where their interests lie, learners feel that they ask mainly questions which warrant a one-word answer encouraging learners to choose from among activities already planned. This was indicated by the following comments: "The teachers would sometimes ask, 'Do you understand me?' or, 'How long have you been learning English?' For these we just have to give one-word answers. Sometimes we could choose between more reading than writing or we could choose to do more listening in the lab or stay in the class and read. This wasn't a big choice."

When asked whether teachers listen to what learners have to say, it was pointed out that the ultimate decision as to what would take place in the classroom was still the teacher's. Teachers would listen to what learners had to say but not necessarily agree with

suggestions that were made. One learner said, "We had turns to say what we wanted but sometimes the teacher didn't agree. She said no, you can't do it that way. My way is better." Or, sometimes it was, "We say things to the teachers and they never listen." So, learners just ".. say yes, yes and follow the teacher. We never complain." Also it was noted in one program that " ... although the students always say they don't want grammar in the morning, the teacher always says it is better. She tells us that in the mornings we are fresh but the students continue to say no, they don't want this every morning. The teacher doesn't listen."

Learners' comments in terms of actively planning activities for their classes point to teachers not really involving them in this phase of the program. "Teachers never involved students in planning for the class. We just came to the class and sat." Another declared, "I never really helped the teacher to plan for anything in the class." Yet another stated that in her classes, "The students were never involved in anything to do with planning. Teachers did the planning." There was also the feeling that there is more *soft* English done in the class. Teachers do not expect learners to want the "more serious stuff." That is, teachers tend to concentrate on language activities that are very basic. For example, learners said that they spent long periods of time learning all the different ways of greeting each other cheerfully. They did not spend the same amount of time on vocabulary development and reading. Learners felt that they were never really asked about what was important for them to learn. They underscored that they were involved in making choices but not in making decisions about how learning activities should be planned.

But learners definitely felt they should be involved in planning for their classes. One learner commented, "It is important for teachers to ask the students what they want to learn. We wish to know about the teacher's schedule and how things will be done. We wish it will be discussed with us." They claim that teachers try to follow their plan but they should ask learners what they like and want to do. One learner clearly indicated her desire to be involved in planning for her classes. "I would like to be asked about what I would like to do. In a lower level this may be difficult but after I learn some English, I feel that I know some of the things I want to learn." The general situation was summed up

by this learner as, "It is very important for teachers to find out what students want to learn. Students should say what is more important. It should be our opinion and teacher's opinion. We must do this together."

On the other hand, there are some learners who feel that it is better for teachers to plan for them since it is difficult for learners to communicate with the teacher. Also, it is their feeling that the teacher is the one who is in control. As one learner noted, ".. they [teachers] know better than me what is good for us. When we go to class teacher is the leader." Another suggested that, "It is hard for me to plan because my English is not good for talking with the teacher. I am embarrassed... but I know what I want." There was another learner who suggested that although she really feels it is important for learners to help plan some of the activities in class, she thinks they have to learn to speak first before they can help the teacher to plan. If not, it is difficult for the teacher to understand. She however notes, "When you can say something, the teacher should ask you to be involved." A third learner underscored the difficulty of being involved in planning activities since their unfamiliarity with the language content places them at a disadvantage. She said, "To help plan is a little hard. We don't know anything about English, so the teachers tell us."

Most learners expressed negative feelings about teachers taking control and directing class activities. They indicated that they have lots of knowledge and experience but teachers feel they know everything and learners just have to follow the teacher's ideas and suggestions. Their impression of the teachers' perception of them is, "The teachers think we are stupid. We just have to sit quietly and listen." But they brought to my attention that "some students know the inside of English but they don't want to say anything because the teacher doesn't ask them. They just prefer to close their mouths than cause problems." When asked what the *inside* of English means, the learner explained that students know that to learn English, they must focus on all the different skills - reading, writing, grammar, listening and speaking and they know which skills they lack over others.

There was an interesting situation described by one learner where during a speaking exercise she was "shunned" by the teacher for saying too much about the war in

her country. "Everyone wanted to know about this. When I started to explain things a little more philosophically, the teacher didn't want me to share my opinion. He was irritated by my level of interpretation about the situation." Asked why would the teacher be irritated by her higher level of thought, she said her feeling was that "the teacher's opinion of the students is that they should only say so much. He didn't like somebody knowing more than him or more than what an average student should know. I felt some kind of resentment. My impression was that he was thinking that I was a stupid woman talking about things I don't understand."

Learners' opinions as to why they are not asked to be involved in the actual planning of classroom activities centered on their impression of teachers having to cover a specific LINC curriculum. "The teacher has to make a teaching schedule to show the government or the program is made by the school and the teacher has to follow this." Another said that she had the impression that teachers have to follow rules and set guidelines for what is to be taught. She felt that there is a set program curriculum and teachers are paid based on their fulfillment of the goals of the curriculum. She went on to say, "If it is to teach so many rules of grammar or cover fifty to sixty new words per month, whatever." I tried to find out how she had arrived at this conclusion and was told that because "teachers always say we have this to finish or we have to do that next." The teachers explain that "we have to cover some work and then we have tests after. The government likes the students to do tests."

In exploring the idea of learners being involved in planning their own learning experiences, learners identified reasons for their participation as: "If teachers know what our needs are, they will make the program to suit these and this will be good. We will be happy and the teachers will be happy." They also underscored that "if the teacher can develop materials with students and set guidelines, more learning takes place." One learner very strongly insisted that adults have to learn what is important to them. "For adults, you can't force them to learn what is not important then they don't pay attention. What's the point?"

Questioning

Learners felt that one way in which they can participate to help shape their LINC programs is by asking questions in class. In this way they " ... are able to say something to the teacher to make her change direction the way we would like." However, they declared that this is not a very easy task. They found that in a few instances teachers were very receptive to general questions. "From this teacher we could ask immigration questions, we could ask things about our children. In fact I had two very personal problems which this teacher helped me to solve." But generally, teachers were more open to questions that were simple and directed to the content of the language area being taught. Teachers welcomed questions depending on the kind of question and whether the teacher had the knowledge to answer. Teachers were more willing to answer " ... questions related directly to what they were teaching. If the students go astray [divert from the current subject], it is not what the teachers like."

An example was given where the teacher was teaching how to ask questions related to the prices of articles in the store. One learner mentioned that while he was shopping at a grocery store he was called "a bad name" by one of the customers who complained that he had not taken his turn in the queue to the cashier. He explained that this was not true and his initial reaction was to punch the customer. He then asked the teacher why do people call immigrants like him bad names and what was the right thing to do when this happens. He wanted to know whether it was possible to make a complaint to the police or would this be seen as something too trivial to warrant such attention. The teacher's response was, "That was an unfortunate incident. That's too bad it happened! We'll talk about it later. We need to finish learning to ask these [her] questions first." I asked whether the teacher ever returned to discussing this issue and was told, "Of course, no. She didn't want to talk about that." The learner concluded that "sometimes questions are not pleasant for the teachers. Many students know this and try to hold back." Or it may be as another learner indicated, "Students aren't allowed to raise controversial issues in class. It becomes too hard for the teacher particularly if the teacher is a Canadian, [meaning white mainstream Canadian]."

Learners also desist from asking questions because too many questions can upset the teachers and lead to negative relationships which learners wish to avoid. This learner related an incident which she termed "a bad situation for asking questions." She recalled that in class she had the tendency to constantly ask questions. One day the teacher said to her, "You ask too many questions. You stress me out." She was afraid of the teacher's comments. "I don't know what she thinks. I'm afraid so I apologize. I say sorry teacher. This is during the coffee break." She added that it becomes a more stressful situation for teachers " ... if students ask questions they [teachers] cannot answer." She was very remorseful about creating problems for the teacher by her constant questioning. She said, "It's crazy for me. I hate to make my teacher sad. I want to learn but I don't want the teacher upset with me. This is not good." To my question as to why it was so important not to upset the teacher, her response was that if a good relationship does not exist with the teacher then it makes it difficult for learners to seek clarifications or ask the teacher for individual attention. The classroom environment becomes too tense and relationship too strained between learner and teacher. Learners need to feel relaxed and have a sense of trust in their teachers before they open up to what is happening in the classroom. As this learner explained, "I have to like my teacher and she has to like me then I feel good and come to class to say something."

Some learners have found their own way of dealing with teachers not responding to their questions or being upset with them for asking. "When we ask questions, when we do not understand, the teacher is mad. When we ask again, the teacher is very mad, then we never ask again. We just be quiet and allow the teacher to talk. I think the teachers know we don't follow but they don't care. This is for especially students who are low and don't understand too much and don't know how to ask very well. Teachers don't pay attention to them. Only those who are learning fast, fast. So the students don't open their mouths any more."

Another observation made by learners with regard to asking questions in class is that learners can ask simple questions related to the work being done in class but not questions about issues which may reflect the teacher or the program in a negative light. "You can raise your hand if you don't understand the grammar or something and the

teacher will explain. If you still don't understand, she will help you by yourself when she has the time." However, if it is a question about the program in general, maybe some aspect with which learners are not happy, "You have to go to the teacher's office to talk about this. You have to go to her office when you want to say that other things are not good. You are not allowed to do this in the class. She will say you have to talk to her alone." Another said, "I wanted to let her know that students were complaining about the listening tapes but she told me to come to her room to talk with her. I did not go because I was too nervous."

Teachers within LINC Programs

Characteristics of Teachers

Learners interviewed for this project feel that some teachers within LINC programs are not really qualified professionals. They are not capable of doing the job "... since they lack appropriate teaching strategies and become confused very easily." They sometimes do not know at what level to target their teaching. They seem to be "different" from teachers who work in "regular" schools in that they do not prepare for their classes and some of them seem to have no real interest in the job they do as was noted by these comments: "With these teachers we do not understand what is going on. He does not take the tapes or bring books for us to read. We write on our paper and talk about things all the time. Some teachers do not know what kinds of things to do. They have some knowledge but not enough." This learner pointed out, "She came in and asked what we did yesterday. She can't remember." I suggested that maybe this is the teacher's way of checking whether the class remembered what was taught but she insisted, "No, many times this happens. She sometimes forgets what she taught the day before. I think she is too busy. She work at another job."

If the learners cannot follow what the teacher is doing they feel that the teachers think they are "stupid." Learners have found that some teachers are not themselves knowledgeable about teaching English since it would seem that any Canadian who speaks

English is qualified to teach the language to newcomers. This example was given by a learner. "Someone asked him [the teacher] to explain the word *applicable* and he couldn't. I was told that he was just a clerk from Canada Place. He wasn't really a teacher." In another example, it was pointed out, "We asked her to explain how you form the perfect tense and she really couldn't tell us. She said that was too high for the class but we felt she didn't know. Later, we heard her asking another teacher about this."

Learning within LINC programs is definitely related to the teacher. "If the teacher is organized and varies the [teaching] methods to suit the learners we are motivated to learn." On the other hand, if the teacher does not pay attention to the learners' needs, no learning takes place as one learner clearly pointed out, "She did not understand what to do with us. After three months we still don't learn anything." Learners also suggest that not because teachers have a lot of knowledge it follows that they have the skills to teach. One learner declared, "Some teachers are too smart [meaning they have a lot of knowledge] but they are not very good teachers. They can't explain anything properly. It is hard to learn from them.They talk and talk but no meaning to this talk" Another said, "Some teachers know English but they don't have the experience and sufficient knowledge of how to teach." Learners also have the impression that teachers seem to think that they have all the knowledge and the learners have none. This makes learners nervous and withdrawn as is evidenced by the following comments: "Teachers guess that they know everything and we don't, but we don't say anything about this. When we meet with the teachers we are too nervous. We just keep quiet. The teachers talk and talk and we are not learning anything. The teacher thinks he is doing it the best way but we don't follow. We would like to tell him but we are scared that he will be upset."

Being afraid of teachers was a major issue for learners. Most learners fear to approach teachers regarding problems related to the program. Learners feel that teachers are pleased when they make positive comments about their classes. If teachers ask whether they understand the lesson and they say "yes," the teachers are very happy. On the other hand, learners feel that it is upsetting for teachers when they "...complain about the way things happen in the class," or if they ask for changes, which are disagreeable to the teacher as was described in this particular situation. "We told her that we didn't want

to go downtown for field trip but she said that it was good for us. So on the Friday when we went, most students stayed at home. The teacher was mad with us. I was scared that she will tell the Head person and this will be problem for us. I said next time whatever she says I will do."

Learners also feel a sense of trepidation when they meet with teachers for the first time. One learner said, "The first year I came to Canada, I was scared of the teacher but now I feel more confident." Another told me, "The first day we meet with the teacher we are scared so we don't say anything." When I asked why they were scared, the explanation was that learners feel a great sense of discomfort in the new culture. They do not know what are the expectations and what behaviours are acceptable in the classroom. This lack of cultural awareness heightens their fears.

It was mentioned in two instances that learners, particularly those from Asia, find that some teachers favour European learners over others. It was pointed out that "… some teachers allow European students to dominate in the class. Teachers have to control the class and give all students equal opportunity to talk and take part in activities." Another comment related to this issue was, "Teachers don't treat all students the same. They favour students from Europe. They allow them to talk and talk all the time. Sometimes the teacher talks with them so that it is a two or three-people class because the others just sit quiet." Learners who raised this issue felt that the reason for this is "... because the English of the people from Europe, their pronunciation is very good so teachers like this. Students from Poland and Russia learn English faster than people from China or Hong Kong." I tried to clarify if these were the feelings of a few individuals but was told, "It's not only me. All the other students in class talk about this. We don't tell the teachers because they will say it is not right for us to think this way."

Learners also shed light on the importance of teachers understanding the culture of the different countries participants come from so that they can understand the characteristics of their learners and how they behave. Learners sometimes find that when teachers are interested in learning about their countries it is because they are planning to go to these countries to teach English not because they see this as an important aspect of teaching in an ESL context. One learner said, "This teacher wanted to learn Japanese

language and about the customs there because she was going to teach English in Japan not because she wanted to know me better." Another indicated, "Some teachers find out about different cultures because they want to go to work there. If not for this, they're not interested."

Learners also highlighted the need for LINC teachers to become involved in adult education practices. They feel that this is an important criterion for a good ESL teacher. "It is important for ESL teachers to have university education so that they can teach adults." I explained that teachers teaching in the Edmonton Public schools, although they teach children, also need to have a university education. The response to this was, "Well I mean they have to take special training in just for teaching adults." Another respondent said, "Teachers have to know that we are adults and not children. They have to learn how to teach people like us. I am happy with most of my teachers but a few, they should go to get certificate for teaching older people."

It should, however, be noted that it is not fair to generalize about all teachers. They have to be seen as individuals since there are a few teachers who are exceptions such as the one who was "... always available. She answered our [learners] questions, gave us feedback and individual attention. Out of all my teachers [five in number] this one was good." Another learner described one of her LINC teachers as being very nice. "There was one teacher who was very, very nice. She paid attention to everyone in the class." An interesting observation made by one learner is that, "Teachers are just different because some are really teachers. They taught before. They are professionals. They have different feelings." Another stated, "Some are not perfect. They are not bad, just different." Some teachers are referred to as "kind" and "friendly" if they smile with their learners, have coffee with them or find the time to talk about some of their problems even if they do not offer solutions. One learner, although she was critical of her teachers, concluded, "It's not fair to only say bad things about the teachers. Some of them try really hard but it is difficult to please all the students. What is good for me is not good for someone else. I am sure we all make them crazy at times."

When asked to describe the qualities of a "good" teacher, learners saw this person as someone who is patient kind and understanding. She must have knowledge of the

subject matter and enough experience to teach this to the class. A good teacher organizes all kinds of interesting activities for learners and with learners. Good teachers do not only teach in class, they help participants with their problems. They listen to them. They see them as equals, not as subordinates.

Teacher/Learner Relationship

It was acknowledged that the relationship between teacher and learner is very important within LINC programs. This relationship sets the tone for the class and creates an environment of either comfort or discomfort for learners, who feel that "it is very important to have a friendly relationship with the teacher. It is important for teacher and students to have good relationships. It is like when people meet with other people to do things together."

Learners believe that the relationship between the teacher and themselves affects their learning. One learner declared that "if the teacher is nice to us, we feel good and come to classes." Another stressed that "if there is good relationship with teachers, students learn more. If not, students are scared. They don't speak very well so they don't talk with the teacher." Some learners feel that if the relationship between teacher and the class is not good then it is difficult for learners to ask questions and to participate in activities. Good relationship between teacher and learners was seen as even more important for those learners who are more introverted. "Good relationship is very necessary especially for students who are not aggressive in speaking. They want to feel safe. It's a tough situation for these people if they don't feel comfortable in the classroom."

Learners agree that teachers should not be perceived as authority figures. The relationship should be one of equality. It was pointed out that "the teacher has to be seen as friend and family, not as a master." One respondent suggested that "if teachers are friendly, then students are not scared of the teachers that they are higher than them. Teachers have to make classes like family members or friends so that students can

participate freely in classes without fear. Students like friendly teachers who they can talk to."

Learners are very aware of the fragility of teacher/student relationship and are very careful about doing anything which may threaten this relationship. They do not like to offend the teachers or hurt their feelings. "If we say things the teacher does not like, the teacher's feelings are not very good for us. We don't want to make the teacher sad. We don't want the teacher to feel bad. Feeling is very important. We don't want to make the situation sad with the teacher so everybody says O.K." Respect in the classroom is seen by learners as a two way street. Learners pointed out that they have to be respectful of teachers' feelings but the teachers should also be aware of the feelings of their learners. "It is important for teachers and students to have good relationships. Teachers should smile and be kind. It is important for teachers to consider the feelings of their students like we consider theirs."

Although within this relationship learners do revere their teachers, they feel that it is also important to be able to share their concerns with teachers. "We should respect teachers but we should still have the freedom to say I don't like this or that." Respect means being truthful and presenting teachers with honest feedback. "When students complain, it's like the teacher losing face but if we don't say anything I think it's the same as the teacher losing face."

Learners feel that there should be a sense of equality in the classroom. As was previously pointed out, teachers favouring some learners over others is not a good practice. Teachers who exhibit closer relationships with some learners more than others do so because those learners "... talk too much and the teachers find it easy to talk with them." They say some learners are shy and reserved. It not the case that they do not want to participate in class activities or converse with the teacher, it is just that " ... some people are shy. They do not get close to their teacher. They would like to talk with the teacher but they are shy and it is a little difficult."

Activities

Content

The content of LINC programs seem to focus on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. These aspects of the language are taught under various life skills or survival English themes. Learners identified these themes as *The Family*, *Banking*, *Shopping*, *Health*, *Food*, *Clothing* and *Employment*. There is also citizenship education where learners are given information about the history, geography and governance of Canada. "There is a book about Canada which the teacher reads and explains so we know about the country - about the federal and provincial governments." When I asked what else was learned about Canada the reply was, "Now I forgot. It was too much information."

In some programs events are actually time-tabled throughout the day. Learners feel that some LINC programs are even more structured than the public school system. There is no flexibility. For example, one learner in describing her LINC program said, "Everyday in the class from 9:00 to 10:00, we did grammar and then we took a break. When we came back from the break we talked about the grammar. Then we did reading or writing. In the afternoon from 1:00 to 2:00, we talked, read and listened to things about Canada. Every Friday, we went on a field trip." She said she could tell exactly what page of the grammar text she would be studying at what time of the day.

When asked about whether they were happy with the structure of their LINC programs, one comment was, "The work we covered was O.K. but what the teacher did not understand was that higher level students want more deep work on employment because students want to have jobs. For lower level students, filling application forms and just talking about jobs is fine. Higher level students need much more." This seemed to point out that in some cases, the content of LINC programs is not geared towards learners' needs. Another interesting comment was, "When teachers talk about a topic, they just stick to what they want to tell you. The teacher has to explain everything about the subject. The teacher has to give details." A concrete example was teachers focussing on Canada Day as a holiday but not discussing the history that led to this, the

confederation and other important events. It seems like explanations have no depth. "It's the same like when the students ask the teachers a question. The teachers only answer to the point but not very good explanation."

Listening exercises in classes are done mainly with audiotapes or learners listen to the teacher and to each other. For speaking, learners are placed into small groups or they work in pairs. They also make individual presentations to the class. One learner, in commenting about her class presentations said that this was a mandatory component of her program. There were eighteen learners in the class and each was allotted thirty minutes presentation time. The presentations went on for an entire week during which it would seem the teacher did no preparatory work. It was felt that this activity suited the needs of the teacher who had complained of being tired on previous occasions. The learner summed up her feelings in this way: "The class presentations were boring to everyone. Many of us were sleeping. It was convenient for the teacher to have presentations. No preparation for her."

Writing activities are based on writing stories about pictures or events such as festivals in Canada. Writing activities could also include making summaries of reading content. Reading materials I am told are more about, "... stories of how to live in Canada. Things you should do or shouldn't do. About people who come here and they are happy."

Grammar is " ... taught by rules. You have to learn the rules and know how to use them. If not you make too many mistakes and the teacher has to correct you all the time. It's past tense not present tense." Vocabulary is developed by learning new words everyday and making a note of these for future use. "We have to write down the new words and then we keep revising and revising."

In some programs, a lot of attention is paid to pronunciation and accent reduction. When asked whether it was felt that accent reduction was a very important aspect of second language learning, the answer was a unanimous "Yes, it is important." When I asked for reasons, I was told that "if I don't speak with a Canadian accent, people don't understand me. They always say excuse me or pardon me! This makes me very uncomfortable." Another claimed, "When I speak and I have this [her own] accent, people look at me very strange." It was felt that without a Canadian accent, it is more

difficult to find a job. One learner strongly felt, "If I want to be a Canadian, I must have Canadian accent." I candidly asked him if he would suggest that I reduce my accent. He said "no, no. You have a good job. Your pronunciation is very clear and I understand you very easily." I informed him that I also understood him very well and I had no problems with his accent. He shook his head vehemently doubting his ability to effectively communicate because of his non-Canadian accent.

Using Learners' Experiences

Learners suggest that activities within LINC programs do not reflect what goes on in their daily lives. One comment was, "The real thing outside is different from the classroom. In the classroom, everything is simple, you don't have to worry but when you go outside, you can't say anything." Another comment was, "It's all very simple in class. Basic things we do in the class like hello or my name is ... but when you go on the street there are many things you have to do." In support of this observation another interviewee informed me that activities done in the classes are not realistic. "Like you ask on the phone 'What time do you close?' Or when you make an appointment on the phone to see the doctor it is O.K. But when you go to special doctor he asks you all kinds of questions which you cannot answer. Too many things in the class are not for real."

A concrete example cited of an *unreal* situation is where learners are asked to role-play setting up an interview for employment via the telephone. The teacher writes out the dialogue and learners work in pairs to read this with some emotion and action. The dialogue is normally never problematic. The conversation takes place in a very polite and unrealistic way as was summed up by this learner. "Everything was O.K. It was thank you very much and goodbye. No problems. It was all very easy. But when I go home and I have to call, it's all very different. I feel very unbalanced and scared. Canadians speak too quickly. I think in class we need better practice for real." One learner declared that if real situations were not simulated in the classroom, she forgets most of what she learns.

When asked about how the classes help them in their everyday lives, one learner declared, "I learnt how to speak English, to ask for things in the store or to make

appointments. It helped me know what to say in Canada." Another said, "I got some kind of self-confidence because when I learnt something about shopping, I knew how to ask questions from the salesperson." On this same question, another learner commented that the language taught in LINC programs focuses too much on life skills or survival English. "They teach you English so that you can go to the store and ask for bread or something else. They don't teach you how to fight for your rights." Another pointed out that some of the activities done in LINC classes are too simplistic. It was felt that "these classes are generally profiled for average learners. Sometimes it is difficult for learners who can do more and for those who are down at the bottom."

There was also the comment that within LINC programs teachers make incorrect assumptions about learners, lumping all of them into the same category, that is, the category of people from very underdeveloped countries. Teachers demonstrate how to use the telephone, a washing machine or a vacuum cleaner but "... people know how to use these things. They don't only have these in Canada. Students get very irritated about these kinds of classes. Teachers have to realize that many students come from countries with high standards of living. We know all about these things here. What we don't know is the language. People don't want to learn something they already know." Learners are not only irritated but they also feel demeaned. They feel that teachers have a very low concept of who they are. This affects their self-esteem. As one participant declared, "These classes make you feel put down. It's like teachers think you don't know about civilization. They even want to teach you how to use the bathroom. Maybe few students don't know how, not because they never seen bathrooms before but because they are too lazy to do the right thing. Not only immigrants, but many other people are lazy. I go to see a movie and no students there, but the bathroom is still very untidy." So it seems that there is also an element of stereotyping when teachers use these demeaning tasks as topics for teaching English.

It is learners' views that the content and activities within LINC programs should be related to their lives. As mentioned by learners, "In class, it is important to talk about the different things which affect students. We need to discuss things about our lives here in Canada." They feel that classroom situations should reflect the real life situations they

encounter on a daily basis and should not be artificial events set up by the teacher. For example, with regard to shopping, it was noted that "teachers talk only about the basic things of shopping. We learn to ask what is the price of something. We talk about the stores and flyers, the different departments, but not about things like sometimes when you are an immigrant and you're shopping, the people selling in the store watch you more than Canadians [meaning that these people view immigrant shoppers with suspicion]. Or, you can get charged for shoplifting. Shopping is more than buying. There are many other things the students must know." Another reason given for relating learning English to learners' lives is because "when students come to learn English, they come with many other problems. If the teacher doesn't look at these problems, then learning English is not very helpful." It was noted by one learner that "... it is a good idea to have some time in class where students can talk about some of their problems. This will help them to find answers and provide experience for other learners. It will also help teachers to know what to teach."

In addition to survival English, another learner suggested that "learning to shop and talk on the phone is good but we should also learn about collision with your car. How do we handle this? The teacher has to talk with us about other things like elections so we can talk about how politicians behave and what to look for in a good politician." He jokingly continued, "maybe I make a good politician!"

One experience that learners feel should be seen as important in LINC programs is their experience of living in another country. They believe that time should be spent to discuss and share cultures so that they can have the opportunity to exchange visions, to learn about other countries and people. In some classes they were involved in this kind of sharing and felt much "richer" from the experience. In some programs there is not enough cultural exchange. " ... we wish it could have been more. We sometimes talk about festivals in different countries and how other people live but it's not enough." It was also mentioned that when learners talk about their own experiences they are more motivated to talk. The subject is familiar and they feel a sense of confidence to share knowledge and experiences. They said, "We just have to think about finding the right words. When we talk about Canadian things, it is more difficult."

There is also the notion that because LINC programs do not take place in "regular" schools [meaning the Edmonton Public or Catholic schools], the emphasis is not on seriously learning the language. Learners are seen as newcomers who need to be "put at ease" rather than be given the practical communication skills that would truly enable them to function in the Canadian environment. It would seem that the focus of programs is to enable learners to do the basic everyday things in life but not to become "active" citizens. As one interviewee mentioned, "If I were a senior, then maybe what I learn is O.K. I learn how to go on the bus or bank my cheque. But I need much more. I want to learn how to deal with some of my problems. I want to ask difficult questions and know how I can help others in my community."

Teaching Strategies

Varied teaching strategies are used in LINC programs and include role plays, simulations, games, group work, individual work, and pair work as evidenced by these comments: "Sometimes we worked in groups or in pairs. We asked each other questions and gave answers. At times with some topics we talked to the class one by one. Sometimes we work in groups to write things on the big paper and put it on the board, then the teacher corrects. Like we talk about Thanksgiving and then we write about it together. We read some conversation to one another in pairs. The teacher listens to us and she corrects our grammar. Teacher gives us presentations to do and we take turns to talk. Sometimes one person acts as cashier and the other as customer or one acts as doctor and the next one as patient."

Field trips are also made to places of interest. Sometimes the teacher selects the places to visit or learners are asked to choose from suggestions made by the teacher. "She asked us if we wanted to go to the Muttart Conservatory or to the library downtown. But I don't know which to pick." Learners feel that field trips are sometimes purposeless. "You don't know why you're going and what you will learn." They do not mind if a few of these trips are just excursions to relax but generally they would like trips to be connected

to their learning. "If we go to see something she is teaching about or what we have to learn, that is better." Besides field trips, guest speakers are also invited to the classes. Learners appreciate this, particularly if what is said is important to their lives. "When teachers get speakers to come to the class to talk about things the students want to know, I am very happy." Another comment was, "Some guest speakers I don't understand because they speak too fast. I like if the person can speak slowly and the topic is very interesting." To my question of what are interesting topics, the response was "things the students want to know - how to sponsor your other family. The lawyer talked to us about this."

However, it was noted by learners that instead of just focussing on teaching learners new concepts, imparting skills that will lead to independence is an important consideration. Learners felt that an effort should be made "... to teach students how to learn." When I sought clarifications on this, one learner gave the example that some teachers do not actually show the class how to use the dictionary so that learners can find the meanings of words on their own. Another example was that "teachers do not teach students how to read the weather for themselves on TV." Learners felt that it is important and advantageous to do things for themselves since they gain a sense of independence and accomplishment. They do not like to "... ask teacher everything ... every question. Some things we have to know by ourselves. We have to learn how to find our own answers. This is important for our lives. We have good feelings about this."

There is also the view that some teaching strategies are not appropriate for adult learners. They confirmed Knowles' theory that teaching adults is different from teaching children (Knowles, 1984). They complained that some of the teaching methods focus on too much "fun" activities which were described as "stupid." For example, these activities involve playing games to memorize the names of other learners or games to relax the class after a test. The question was asked "… was this play therapy?" It was supposed that fun activities are easier for the teachers "... since there is no stress for them to teach. But these activities did not really help us to learn." Another learner, in voicing her concern for over simplistic activities said, "I have to tell you the impression of students in my class. Maybe this is interesting for you. Some gentlemen didn't want to play games.

These games were about songs and acting. They found it very childish. For example too, at one time we had to cut out pictures of clothing from magazines and flyers. The men didn't want to do it. They thought it was just too silly." In other words, the teachers do not contextualize these activities. Rather than the activities being used as tools to learn concrete materials, they are used as surface games which relate to nothing and further make learners feel foolish.

There was also the comment that sometimes there was too much emphasis on learning new words and concepts by rote. "I learned questions with *ever* and *never*. I repeated these questions like fifty times. It was boring but I learned it. Repetition is sometimes a good way of learning but it is better for lower level students or children maybe." This participant said that when she was told she had to learn the rules for grammar, she had to write these over and over again. She claimed that "repeating over and over is the best method for the teacher." (Although she did not actually say it, I could discern that this meant it was not the best method for the learners). With regard to learning new words, another learner said, "I wrote the new words ten times [each]. If I don't remember, the teacher tells me to write it more. I try to understand and when I do, then I take another word. But it is very hard for me to do it this way." She went on to explain that, "I use the English/Vietnamese dictionary - the machine. This helps me very much in class. I had to buy this machine because regular dictionary is too hard. With the machine I go a little faster with the English. If I read and I don't understand, it's not good for me. It's not good for my life." It seems that her teacher does not know how or does not make an effort to relate what is being taught to her learners' lives. She does not realize that by making very real connections with the learner, learning would become more relevant and therefore more sustainable. The method is taken out of context. Content is learned as an item standing alone from life and the method used for teaching about that item is culturally and andragogically inappropriate.

Learners' Integration into Canadian Society

Self-Concept

Learners expressed their feelings of loneliness and sadness and the need for teachers to be understanding of this and to treat them with kindness and respect. One learner said, "Immigrant students are very lonely and sad. They miss their homes and family. They want teachers to be kind, to show them some respect. This is very good." Much of the same need was expressed in Wilson's (1996) study where she found that when learners were lonely and far away from home and loved ones, the subject matter became secondary to the relationships that was formed with their instructors. Learners feel that teachers are disrespectful to them just because they cannot speak the language. One learner described what was a very embarrassing situation in one LINC program she attended. "In this class at this school, if you come half an hour late after 9:00, the teacher will tell you to stand outside. Every student was scared about this. I think this hurts your feelings as an adult. You feel very low. It's not nice to stand outside and everyone passing beside you asking why you're outside. This was bad. I wonder if they do this to students at the university or Grant Mac Ewan?" She felt that in most instances, learners had valid reasons for being late and teachers should have respected these. She said that once she was late because her husband was sick and unable to drive the children to school so she had to make alternative arrangements. This caused her to be late but when she arrived in class, the teacher gave her no opportunity to explain. She was told, " … you're the second one who's late today so you can take your turn and stand outside." She said that she felt so humiliated that even when she was accepted back in the class she could not concentrate on her work.

Learners try to hide their ignorance from the teacher when they do not understand certain concepts because they are ashamed. They feel that as adults they are "... supposed to know most things. We don't want the teacher to know that we don't know or we do not understand." They develop feelings of inadequacy which permeate not only their language learning but also their entire lives. "You don't feel good about yourself. You are

always scared. You meet people who speak English, you are scared to talk with them. You find it hard to even want to do things by yourself." Learners are embarrassed by their inability to communicate effectively in English and there is always this general feeling of discomfort and inadequacy adjusting to the new culture and environment. "Everything is different. Language is different. You're not very comfortable. It's a very uncomfortable situation here. It's not like my own hometown. People watch you strangely." They prefer to be quiet rather than speak and make mistakes lest people make fun of them. Asian people in particular, because of their difficulty with mastering pronunciation skills, say that they have experienced, "... when we talk, people laugh at us." Within the wider society learners meet people whom they say are "more powerful" because they " ... speak much and they speak quickly. We don't understand them. We are stressed. We are so afraid."

They also feel that they are looked down upon by some mainstream Canadians who do not like immigrants. "Sometimes I feel that they [Canadians] look down on me because I am an immigrant and my English is poor. For example, I find this in my neighborhood and at my daughter's school. Parents just look me up and down." Another commented, "I don't think people here accept me one hundred percent. I don't feel comfortable." While still another concluded, "Some people are impolite because of my accent. They do not take the time to listen. It is my problem if I understand them or not. They don't care for what I say."

There is no doubt that learners in LINC programs live in a climate which is unaccepting of immigrants. Although Canadian immigration laws permit immigrants into the country, many Canadians do not subscribe to the country's immigration policy. A great deal of ethnocentrism exists. Many residents of Canada would insist that there is no class structure here, yet the very need for affirmative action suggests the opposite. In the job market (which reflects Canada's class stratification), white males are most apt to have jobs, followed by white females. This is followed by invisible minority males and then females. Visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples have the least access to both education and jobs.

The rights of learners as immigrants was also an issue. They feel that because of their lack of English, people (or the system) take advantage of them. Not knowing the language results in not being able to access available services or not being able to speak up about injustices. "When people just migrate to this country, they don't feel like they have any rights, They can't express themselves and this is a big disadvantage." There is always a constant battle going on between immigrants and "the system." They are in a strange country and need to learn how things happen. For example, what are the rules regarding health care or loans from the Student Finance Board. Because of their ignorance they are "pushed around." Things do not come their way very easily. "Life is a constant struggle."

An example of a simple situation was given where a learner wanted to move from a lower to a higher level LINC class. She did not have a choice because "... each class has a quota. We can't move students around." It was more important to maintain the numbers in the class than to have the learner appropriately placed. Since she did not have the communication skills to argue her case, no further attention was paid to her request. She had to seek the assistance of an advanced learner in another program who spoke up on her behalf. "It took three weeks for the matter to be resolved and for me to be transferred to a higher level class. Things don't come your way very easily. You have as much rights as you can fight for. On many occasions you are not given what you deserve. You have to fight for what you want. It is not like you will be given."

On the issue of equality between immigrant learners and mainstream Canadians, learners felt that there was a big discrepancy in the way immigrants are treated as evidenced by employment opportunities. One view was that "if I apply for a job and a Canadian applies, if we have the same qualifications, of course the Canadian will be given the first chance." I explained that jobs were more readily available to Canadian citizens and this was fair. The response was, it was not the citizenship that was an issue, it was skin colour or nationality. The learner pointed out, "I have friends who are Canadian citizens and it makes no difference. It is what you look like that makes you get the job or not." He looked me straight in the eye and asked, "Was this not a problem for you? You tell me."

I did not tell him but I did reflect on one occasion when I showed up for an interview and no one expected a person of my nationality. I had to confirm more than three times, that I **was** Rosetta. I left the interview knowing for sure that I would not be hired, not because I couldn't do the job, but because I was not a white mainstream Canadian. I also thought of another occasion when I was the last of a group of teachers to be hired to teach on an ESL program that had an exclusively mainstream Canadian staff. Although I was very eligible for the position and did an extremely good interview, I was given the least consideration..

In discussing this issue of discrimination with another learner, she said "in Canada, we say we want all people to be equal, for them to feel welcome but ... (pause) the system encourages division ... (pause again) You have to be an immigrant always." Another learner pointed out, "They [people in general] don't treat you the same way they treat Canadians." There was a general feeling that immigrants have to be "second class" citizens, particularly those labelled visible minorities.

With regard to how LINC programs generally facilitate the integration of newcomers into Canadian society, it was felt that "the system teaches people to be more submissive." Learners claim that actual classroom activities encourage them to take a passive role." One learner pointed out, "With the kind of activities we do, you can't question, you can't analyze. Our ESL classes do not prepare us to advance in Canada. From these classes, I can see that immigrants are supposed to be in this role forever." When I sought clarifications on this, I was told that the perception is for immigrants always to be in the lower rank of society. One learner summed it up by saying, "Whatever is taught in class makes learners feel that there is a level of progress which they can achieve but they should not aspire to go beyond this."

Employment Opportunities

Finding employment is an integral part of newcomers' integration into Canadian society. *Employment* is a teaching unit that is covered in almost all LINC level 3 programs. Learners expressed deep frustration in finding appropriate jobs to match their

skills. They feel that it is unfair that the credentials from their countries of origin are not accepted in Canada. They pointed out that in many instances there are no big differences in job skills across countries. As one learner said, "If I am a baby sitter in Poland, the same principles apply to babysitting in Canada. But I cannot do the same job because everyone asks for Canadian experience. You know why?" I said that I didn't, so she continued, "It's because this is the way to keep immigrants out from the job market." Another learner observed that "many people come here with certificates but these are not recognized." I want to be an Accountant but I have to start all over again because my certificate is not accepted here. It is not right. I don't know why I studied four years in my country. It's the same thing I learned. The only thing different is the language so why can't I have the same kind of job?" I threw the question back at her and asked whether she could come up with any answers. Her first response was, "Maybe because we are immigrants the expectation is that we should do the lower work." She pondered, and then continued, "I don't know why people feel this way. We are same like all people. We shouldn't be different" I posed the same question to another respondent who had also brought up the issue of certification. Her explanation was, "It's not supposed to be easy for immigrants. You have to work much harder if you want good jobs. You have to start from the bottom. Look at the malls, all immigrants are cleaning the malls. You don't see white Canadians doing this"

When asked about LINC classes preparing students for employment, learners said that the emphasis is normally on low skilled jobs as evident in this comment. "In classes we talked about janitors, cooks, waitresses ... When we looked at ads for jobs, it was the same thing - cooks and cleaners." Learners are happy to "... take any job because they have to work to get money and their English is not good." Or because "you always see immigrants have to look for any job. You feel that you have to take any low job or else how can you live? You have to pay your bills. You can't wait for good job. Just as I left classes I had to find any job. Doesn't matter if I like it or not." One learner suggested that classes very subtly prepare learners to accept low skilled jobs. "For example, we watched the video tapes they [teachers] showed and we saw other immigrants talking about their jobs. One man from Iran was here for twelve years now and he said when he came to

Canada, he started working as a janitor and then gradually as his English improved, he got a job as a mechanic and now he owns his own mechanic shop." Another said, "We also saw one tape of a woman from Vietnam. She never worked in her own country but she had skills for sewing so now she got a job sewing in a factory. It's all about sewing, bartender, waitress, cook or cleaner."

When asked whether they felt that improved English brings about improved chances of employment, answers included: "If your English improves but you don't have the Canadian qualification you still will not get the job you're looking for. It's not only English." 'Some are lucky and it's O.K for them but it's very hard to get a good job like you had in your own country. Not even if your English gets better." Learners expressed their happiness of seeing some immigrants "... in good positions. ... not many, just a few." However, this still sends a message of hope that " ... if you work hard, you may be able to make it to the top."

The barriers to equality are many. In Canada, racism, prejudice and stereotyping are alive and growing. Learners in LINC programs often become the target of these dysfunctional attitudes, particularly if their teachers lack training, cultural awareness and sensitivity.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS

Since the research question tries to examine whether LINC programs are perceived as adult education practice, the data analysis will identify current adult education practices and principles and relate these to the experiences described by respondents. As Law (1979) notes, adult education is not any kind of education which contingently just happens to be for adults. It is education specifically and uniquely related to adults contingent upon how it is taught, what is taught and how it is organized. Adult Education is a distinct field and has its own body of theory, which reflects the principles, and practices of the discipline. The base of these principles is increasing the learners' participation in the educational activity and the learners' responsibility for learning (Brookfield, 1996; Klevins, 1972; Knowles 1984 and Shore 1994). Such principles according to Vella (1994) are integral to a design of adult learning as dialogue. There are a number of principles identified in the current literature which can be summed up as follows:

- **Allowing learners to become partners in the learning process**
  Learners have to be given the opportunity to initiate action and take responsibility for their own learning. They have to be encouraged to develop their own ideas and values and be able to set goals for themselves. They need to be involved in helping to determine the nature and content material for their learning.
- **There has to be a "facilitator" who makes the process of learning possible, rather than an "instructor" who passes on authentic information to learners**
  Power and control are given up by the facilitator so that learners may be empowered instead.
- **Learning activities are related to learners' experiences**

To make learning relevant, activities have to be organized to take into account learners' life experiences and the situations they encounter in their everyday lives. Learners are allowed to question the nature of society and their role in it. They learn to think critically rather than absorb information.

- **Instruction in the adult learning classroom is personalized**
  What is taught in the classroom is as important as how it is taught. Teaching strategies have to meet the needs of learners. Since many individual differences will exist among learners, a variety of teaching methods and materials will have to be used.
- **Assessing learners' needs is also of great importance**
  Being involved in the learning process with adults means finding out what each learner wants and needs. This information can be gathered through a number of approaches. It is important to hear from the learners themselves.
- **Learning takes place in a friendly and informal climate**
  A warm and supportive classroom environment can be created by encouraging learner dialogue and interaction. Learners have the opportunity to explore elements related to their self-concept, to practice problem-solving skills and to develop interpersonal skills.

The data gathered from the study will be analyzed according to the above principles.

Findings

Learners as Partners in the Learning Process

Knowles (1984) identifies the main difference between andragogy and pedagogy as the difference between *teaching* and *facilitating* and the role of learners in helping to

determine their own learning activities. Data from the interviews with respondents who have been participants in LINC programs in Edmonton points to a very superficial level of involvement of learners as partners in the learning process. There is a lot of talk within the field of ESL of involving learners in program planning and program execution. This is an important consideration in any adult education practice and as Davis (1987) points out, theories of adult learning should be applicable to the teaching and learning of adult ESL. But, as the data indicated, translating talk into action is lacking in LINC programs.

In consulting my field notes, I am reminded of a conversation I had with a funder of LINC programs in Edmonton. She disclosed that many LINC proposals depict their programs as steeped in the principles of adult education but one becomes very skeptical about these principles being transferred from well written proposals to actual classroom practice. As described by the interviewees, their LINC teachers are involved in advanced program planning and delivery. What they need from learners is consent to proceed with their plan of action. Involving learners therefore in partnership in the classroom is a facade, a kind of 'cover-up' to make transparent the notion of learners' involvement.

Some of this cover can be discerned in the way teachers design learners participation in classroom activities. They ask them to make choices from plans already made. Learners' options are not really created by them but rather by the teacher. For example, learners are asked to make a choice about which place to go on a field trip but not to have a say in whether a field trip is necessary or not. Teachers involve learners in tasks but not in actual decision making with regard to planning for those tasks. Bailey and Celce-Murcia (1979) in discussing this superficial level of learners' participation in adult education programs say that teachers involve learners in management tasks but not in content activities of the program. They note that in many instances, learners are allowed to do the roll call in the classroom, return corrected papers, help with displays on the bulletin board or make announcements. This is a very "surface' kind of participation - very superficial, one that makes learners feel that they are in control when in fact the teacher very much dictates what, when and how things should happen. Some learners speak about being asked to write answers on the blackboard or field questions from the class but all these activities are teacher directed.

Maybe, the best way to understand the practice of involving learners in planning for their own education experiences is in terms of power and interests. We need to examine who has the power to do what and whose interests are represented in designing programs and activities. Whose interests are considered during the planning will determine how activities are shaped and structured. It would seem that within LINC classrooms, teachers' interests count a great deal. As one of the interviewees for this study pointed out, although learners tried to tell the teacher that they were not happy doing grammar every morning, the teacher still insisted that it should be done. The question I am tempted to ask is, was it in **her** interest to have this as a scheduled part of her class activity so that it would be favourably noted by her administrator? Certainly her interest was not hearing from the learners. The teacher was definitely planning from her stance of power. This same teacher, however, was one who had asked learners on the first day of class what it was they wanted to learn. She had made notes of their comments and suggestions. The learners' expectations were that they would be a part of the consultations regarding classroom activities as well as a part of the decision making. Cervero and Wilson (1994) contemplate the fallacy of assuming that just because teachers ask learners what it is they want to learn, this makes the exercise of planning participatory. They recommend that teachers have an ethical responsibility to **hear** what learners have to say and to have their interests represented in classroom activities.

Knowles (1984) says that, merely seeming to provide the mechanisms for mutual planning between teacher and participants is not good enough. He warns that we should avoid playing games that Skinner cites from Rosseau's Emile:

> Let [the student] believe that he is always in control
> though it is you [the teacher] who really controls. There is not
> subjugation so perfect than that which keeps the appearance
> of freedom, for in that way one captures volition itself (p. 123).

If LINC programs are to be treated as adult education programs, then learners have to be involved in shaping the content of their programs every step of the way. Asking LINC learners on the first day of class what their needs are, often does not bring about satisfactory responses. Learners need time to feel comfortable with both teacher and fellow learners before they develop confidence to share ideas or concerns. The ESL

classroom can be very intimidating and threatening for adults who, after being in control for all of their lives, now suddenly find that they have lost the ability to communicate. Language is an integral part of a person that not being able to use one's language becomes similar to losing one's arms or legs. Faigan (1986), in discussing the teaching of ESL from a Freirian perspective, alludes to the anxiety from which older learners suffer in ESL classrooms. She says that they are being introduced to a very intimate yet intimidating area of learning and fear any form of failure. She sees the classroom environment as very threatening with the teacher as an authority figure and other learners, particularly those with more formal education or some pre-knowledge of the language, posing a serious threat to learners making fools of themselves. Therefore, learners will not venture to make their voices heard until they have developed some degree of trust for the teacher and for each other. It is not easy for them to be forthright about what is it they want to say.

Dean (1994) also writes about this issue and like Faigan, notes that involving learners in shaping their own learning activities is not always an easy task since learners may react in different ways to this invitation. Some may lack the confidence, others may feel threatened or others may feel a sense of anxiety having to make suggestions in front of their peers. I remember discussing this issue at a recent ESL Conference and this was the reaction of most teachers in the room. There was a resounding unanimous response that ESL learners do not want to become involved in decision making and therefore, there is nothing the teacher can do about this. Teachers then suppose that this particular stance should not be pursued and there is a feeling of resignation. However, Dean suggests that if the teacher senses a reluctance on the part of learners to become involved, it does not mean that this is an excuse to stop right there. His advice is to begin with activities which warrant lower learners' involvement and when learners begin to feel a sense of comfort, higher levels could be aimed at.

Vella (1994) supports Dean on this idea of the gradual involvement of learners in planning for classroom activities. She notes that it is true that ESL learners are sometimes reluctant to become involved in planning for their activities but she also says that this is no excuse for not involving learners as partners in designing their classroom experiences.

A strategy she points to that teachers can use is the small group approach where learners normally feel safer. She suggests that at first, learners may be very hesitant to say anything. They will look to others for making the start. However, if there is one bold learner who takes the lead, others tend to tentatively follow. This sharing will definitely be on a small scale at first but will gradually increase as learners continue to become involved in the dialogue of what happens in the classroom - as they begin to feel a sense of trust and comfort with each other and the teacher and also as the teacher makes more and more room to encourage and value their participation.

Some teachers have also brought to my attention the difficulty of using a participatory approach to learning ESL with a beginning level LINC class. The assumption is made that the lower the level of the class, the less learners can contribute to making decisions about what should take place in the class. As Nash, Carson, Rhum, Mc Grail and Gomez-Sandford (1992) note, with this level, teachers can fall into patronizing and controlling their learners. Teachers tend to forget that they are among adults who have lived very full lives, that these are people who have endured tremendous hardships and whose lives are rich with experience that demonstrate a good deal of knowledge and wisdom about the world. However, with the lower levels, there are times when a participatory approach will be difficult because there is not sufficient language to communicate ideas. One of the approaches I have used in this context is to find interpreters that learners know and can trust. Opportunities could be provided to communicate ideas through non-linguistic forms such as drawings and role plays Sometimes sufficient information is not forthcoming but with carefully thought out language activities, learners' interests could be discerned and built upon.

There are some learners who have indicated that they do not like to become involved in helping to design their own learning experiences. They have come from systems of education which follow the more traditional form of education where the teacher is very authoritarian. Learners become very uncomfortable if they are asked to help make decisions regarding the design of the learning process. Knowles (1984:56) acknowledges that the conditioning effect of traditional education on learners becomes problematic in the adult education classroom. He has found on many occasions that:

> The minute they [learners] walk into an activity labelled 'education' or 'training' or any of their synonyms, they hearken back to their conditioning in their previous school experience, put on their dunce hats of dependency, fold their arms, sit back and say 'teach me.'

However, despite the odds which teachers may face, it is still very important to have learners fully involved in their education. In a study of ESL learners at Alberta Vocational College, La Berge (1992) found that ESL learners know what it was they want to learn. They have goals and aspirations and a sense of which direction they would like to head. What La Berge saw as the problem was teachers not providing the opportunity to allow learners to work towards their goals. They have no voice in program planning and implementation. He concludes that adult ESL learners have to be listened to if educators are to provide them with the opportunity of being equal participants in Canadian society. The learners he interviewed for his study described their language experiences as characterized by "frustration, a sense of urgency and panic, resistance and despair" (p. 67).

Teacher vs Facilitator

The question that needs to be asked is, "Are there teachers or facilitators in LINC programs?" The learners interviewed for this project all referred to the person conducting their learning experiences as *teachers*. In my own experience, ESL teachers are also referred to as *instructors*. Each of these labels carries with it its own connotations. The role of a *teacher* is seen as teaching - passing on information, the same as *instructor* which means to instruct - to tell how things happen, to say what are the rules or the facts. Cranton (1992) points to the difficulty of adult educators choosing roles as instructors or facilitators. She claims that both of these have a place in adult education depending on the nature of the program. She points out for example that a facilitator may not suit a learning situation where, " ... learners are gaining specific skills or absorbing basic facts" such as learning to operate a new piece of equipment or learning what the laws are regarding immigration to Canada (p. 78). She, however suggests that where a program encourages

and supports the growth of learners, there is need for a facilitator instead of an instructor. LINC programs fit this description since participants are being educated to integrate into Canadian society. As Hewitt, Gonzales, Fandell and Brucker (1992) point out in their article *Teachers' Stories: Expanding the Boundaries within the Participatory Approach,* the role of second language learning is seen as helping participants to develop their language skills so that "they can make meaning in English." They also see participants as agents of change - both in their own personal lives and in society as a whole.

Bhola (1989) defines the role of the facilitator as giving guidance, assisting with developing the process to ensure that learning takes place, the idea being to facilitate rather than to control. Freire (1989) in discussing his learning circles, sees the facilitator as fitting in to the circle and since it is a circle there is no place for authority and control. Everyone is an equal 'part of.' This is what learners probably mean when in the interviews they said that teachers and learners should be equal. One should not be positioned higher than the other. In fact, as recorded in the presentation of the data, one learner went on to say that the classroom has to be seen as the family where there is mutual respect and equality. Learners feel that as adults, they should be able to enter into discourse with their teachers. There should be the sharing of information instead of the creation of rules and regulations to be followed.

It would however seem that within LINC programs there is the concept of the teacher as an authority figure. Learners speak about their fears of meeting with the teacher for the first time or being scared about hurting the teachers' feelings by speaking out on issues which concern them. They also tell about teachers not taking kindly to their constant questioning in class, particularly questions related to controversial issues. Teachers seem to want to exercise a firm control over learning activities. This could be a reason for not asking learners about their needs as the classes progress.

Learners gave the impression that LINC classes were very structured with teachers in direct control of classroom activities. It would seem that these programs fit into a scenario similar to the public school system with the teacher as the prime decision-maker. The teacher's role is conceived as planning the program, designing the curriculum and ensuring that learning objectives are met. They also design tests to measure learners'

progress. Learners shared their frustration of not being able to communicate with teachers and to share and discuss problems.

Within my field notes, my observation has been of LINC programs with very structured timetables. One LINC program described to me by learners was seen to be very rigid where at 10:30 in the morning, the Coordinator of the program knew which class was doing what lesson. Lessons were planned out to the extent of the page number of the text from which the activity would be taken. Again, one of the learners interviewed for the study told of a very fixed timetable which was followed. It was important for the teacher to cover the work planned for the day and not to digress from planned activities. Learners told of being asked to follow instructions, to learn how to do things the Canadian way; to follow rather than to question; to be passive rather than controversial. They expressed their feeling that ignorance of the language was equated with "non-intelligence." Not being able to comprehend the language caused teachers to see them as "dependent," "ignorant" and sometimes even "stupid."

It is my view that teachers are able to hold on to power in the classroom since they have the tool to communicate while their learners who do not have the language are disempowered. Corder (1977) speaks about the inappropriateness of this practice when he writes that, "I believe that we shall not be successful in language teaching and learning so long as we insist on the traditional relationship of pedagogy and pupil in which the teacher is seen as the dominant member of this relationship" (p.12).

Teachers as facilitators create a process of open communication between themselves and participants so that they can learn from each other, exchange ideas and concerns and share responsibility for the class. This is the only way decisions and plans can become open to negotiation. Facilitators of learning respect each participant as a person of worth and create a learning climate that motivates and encourages participation. Knowles (1984) stresses the importance of the learning climate established by facilitators of adult education. He refers to personality theorists who claim that a learning climate should be characterized by respect for individual and cultural differences. It is not only the physical climate - light, heat, seating arrangement among others which matters. There has to be freedom and safety for learners to experiment with new ideas, attitudes and

values. A mentally healthy climate is normally fostered by a good facilitator who encourages the interactive participation of learners. Knowles claims that, "If the climate is not really conducive to learning, if it doesn't convey that the organization values human beings as its most valuable asset and their development its most productive investment, then all other elements in the process are jeopardized" (p. 120).

If teachers do not foster open communication with their learners, if they do not facilitate their involvement in classroom activities, then learners will be marginalized from the active process of learning, of growing into independent citizens with the ability to positively contribute to the new society.

Relating Learning Activities to Learners' Experiences

Cranton (1992) notes that "using experience as a way of learning and using experience as a source of learning are two fundamental concepts of adult education" (p. 57). Knowles (1984), Tough (1979), Auerbach (1992) and Brookfield (1988) among others support this basic principle of adult education. For Knowles (1979) this is where the principal difference lies between andragogy and pedagogy. He notes that adults are different from children in that they have already developed a great deal of life experiences from which they can draw. These experiences form a substantial part of their education and should not be discarded in the classroom but should form the foundation upon which other knowledge can be built, developed and expanded. There is the expectation then, that since LINC programs are for adults this would be a guiding principle but according to the respondents interviewed for this project, it would seem that teachers do not fully utilize the experiences of their learners when planning classroom activities. It would seem that teachers are bent on passing on a certain amount of information, or as some learners indicated, they have a set curriculum to follow. It is not important to centre activities on the life experiences of learners.

Some teachers do attempt to focus on learners' experiences but such attempts are oftimes weak and fraught with unrealistic assumptions. Teachers do not dig deep to find out about the lives of their learners. They have the tendency to generalize. For example,

some teachers feel that all Vietnamese learners come from the same socio-economic background or that all Chinese speaking participants in LINC programs face the same problems. There have been comments from teachers such as, "Men from Eastern Europe are too aggressive to the point of taking over the class. You'd better watch out with them." (This was one LINC teacher's advice to one of her colleagues). Another bit of advice I overheard one day was, "Punjabi women never speak out. They are so quiet. Don't push them. They are happy to just come to the class and be here." But I recall on another occasion a newly hired LINC teacher described the Punjabi woman in his class as, "She's something else. She always asks why and never takes my word for anything!" I couldn't help being amused.

Learners also pointed to the very artificial situations re-enacted or simulated in the LINC classrooms to the point that when they are faced with the very same situations in real life, they cannot transfer what they have learnt in the classroom at all. In the review of my field notes, I found a story I had written two years ago about a learner, Quan, whom I unexpectedly bumped into during my coffee break at an ESL serving agency where I once worked. Quan was in tears and when I finally convinced her to share her problem with me, she explained that she had sought to rent an apartment and had prepared for the meeting with the building superintendent by revising some of the dialogue she had done in her ESL classes. She thought that she would be able to pull off negotiating for the apartment really well because her teacher had only praise for her reading of the dialogue when she had done this in class. To her utter disbelief, when the superintendent started asking her questions like did she have a boyfriend and making comments such as, "I know the likes of you young people. Everyday it's a different one you're bringing in. I had one just like you before and she was no good. All of you, you're up to no good. Go bring a letter of reference from your other *Sup* then we can talk." She was astounded. The superintendent also wanted to know if she was working, could she keep a steady job and how many packs of cigarettes did she smoke per day ending with, "You Vietnamese kids, you think that you're smart, smarter than the law, but you're not."

Quan said that she was never more insulted in her life. The fact that she was

neither Vietnamese nor a "kid" (she was twenty-five but looked eighteen because she was so petite), made her even more upset. I am not claiming that the teacher could have predicted this situation, but, paying attention to the discrimination newcomers can face with settling in to the new country could have somehow prepared Quan for this traumatic experience.

During the interview with learners, they made several references on a number of occasions to these unrealistic dialogues that LINC teachers prepare. They discussed their fears of being faced with the same situations outside of the classroom and their inability to respond appropriately. One learner told of how difficult it was to return an item of clothing to the store although she had rehearsed some of this one day in her LINC class. She declared, "It is not the same thing. The teacher doesn't prepare you for the hard questions people can ask or the bad way you can be treated."

I am reminded of Wallerstein (1993) who cautions the use of situational dialogues which only contain survival vocabulary. She cites this example from a situational method book:

At the Doctor's Office

Mrs Garcia:	*Is the Doctor in?*
Nurse:	*What is your name? Do you have an appointment?*
Mrs. G:	*No, but I'm very sick. My name is Mrs. Garcia. My friend told me to see Dr. Smith.*
Nurse:	*Let me speak to the doctor. (Returning to the reception room)*
	Dr. Smith will see you after the next patient.
Dr. Smith:	*What is your trouble Mrs. Garcia?*
Mrs. G.:	*I have a bad pain in my chest. I cough all the time.*
Dr. Smith:	*Your lungs seem clear. I'll give you a prescription. Have it filled at the drug store. Try to get some rest.*

(p. 38).

As Wallerstein explains, a dialogue of this nature is too superficial and does

not address the problems learners may actually face in going to see the doctor. They may have difficulty explaining their problem because of their limited English. They may feel humiliated. Mrs. Garcia may have preferred to see a female doctor and would have liked to ask if this was possible. The doctor may have tried to explain to Mrs. Garcia what her ailment was and she may have encountered difficulty understanding some of the medical terminologies even though he would have tried to keep it simple. Mrs. Garcia may have wanted to ask some questions but could have found it impossible to frame these. How could she ask for help? Wallerstein suggests that teachers have to create real dialogues which reflect the lives of ESL learners and which are more effective in generating discussion and initiating problem solving techniques which learners can use in their everyday lives.

Teachers somehow tend to shy away from issues of prejudice and racism since many feel uncomfortable to discuss these aspects of newcomers' lives. It is easier to ignore the realities than to confront them. It is true in Quan's case that the superintendent had no right to make those derogatory remarks to her but we are all aware that there are huge discrepancies between what should happen and what **does** happen in real life. This shying away from real issues is evident in the story told by the learner who was called a "bad name." The teacher ignored his questions about addressing this situation. It is easier to deal with the rules of grammar or the mechanics of writing than with these real life experiences. However, sweeping these issues under the carpet will not bring about solutions. They need to be brought in the open, highlighted, discussed and analyzed. They should become issues from which positive actions can be framed. As much as teachers try to avoid this kind of dialogue, their learners will still be faced with the dilemma of racism, sexism and discrimination within Canadian society. Not discussing the problem does not make it magically disappear. Instead, it robs learners of the opportunity of turning these negative experiences into more positive action from which they could learn and grow so that they do not feel like powerless victims, or, on the other hand, as aggressors who need to retaliate.

It is therefore important that within the ESL field, an attempt is made to design language learning activities around contextual appropriateness (Davis, 1987). Davis

believes that the content of the language being taught must be located within the context of the learner's life situations if he/she is to make any progress. She cites Li Xiaoju (1984) who emphasizes that learning the language is achieved through the use of real situations and real roles. It is not enough to teach sentences and grammatical rules but how these grammatically correct sentences are used for communication in real situations is what really matters. Because language is made up of words, some educators tend to confuse **words** with **language.** Learning a language does not simply consist of learning words and the grammatical structures that hang these words together. Many ESL teachers have been visitors to foreign lands where they have had to learn the vocabulary to help them cope with their shopping and ordering of food or taking the bus. They therefore know how trapped one feels when he or she cannot respond or become really involved in the life around. Words alone are not enough. In fact words by themselves are useless. Words have to be taught to make sense situationally. Language that is presented as meaningful as possible will be learnt more readily.

Nash, Carson, Rhum, Mc Grail and Gomez-Sandford (1992) who are practitioners in the field, share their experiences in using an adult education approach to teaching ESL. They discovered that learning and teaching are most effective when they take place within a context with which learners can identify. They point out that activities which reflect the social and cultural realities of learners have proved to be most effective. Their suggestion is that one of the first tasks of the teacher is to find out what it is their learners are interested in doing, what their cultural and social realities are and to structure activities based on these realities. The social situation of learners have a direct relationship on their learning. Learners bring a wealth of backgrounds and experiences which can be utilized to benefit the entire class and could become the tool to stimulate language learning. By drawing upon learners' own experiences, classroom activities can be made more relevant and meaningful.

These findings point to the fact that curricula for LINC programs cannot be designed in a vacuum. It cannot be something planned way ahead of the semester, neither can it be taken directly from a textbook. On the contrary, it has to evolve as the realities of learners become clearer. They are the ones with the knowledge of what the important

issues are in their lives and these have to be taken into account by the teacher. As the above writers suggest, it is the role of the teacher to help learners make their issues explicit and then to incorporate them into materials appropriate for classroom use. Auerbach (1992) notes that "the classroom is a model. What happens in the classroom shapes the possibilities outside of the classroom." (p. 21). Corder (1977) says that it has been his experience that more and more learners have been making demands on having their language teaching made more relevant to their needs. He predicts that learners in the future will not accept that the teacher knows best but will ask that the teacher justify what is being taught. As was noted by the learners interviewed for this study, they would like to know about the teacher's "schedule." They would like to have a say in naming their issues. It was not a feeling that the teacher always knows what is best to be taught.

Personalizing Instruction

As was previously mentioned, what is taught is as important as how it is taught. From the interviews with learners, it would seem that teaching strategies used by teachers within LINC programs vary from program to program and from teacher to teacher. It was highlighted that teachers allow learners to do both group and individual assignments. Whether teachers take the time to understand their learners before they decide on their methodology is not very clear. My experience has been that teachers do experiment with various methods and after a time are able to tell which would work best in a particular learning activity with a particular group. However, the ESL classroom calls for a huge amount of creativity and developing a repertoire of strategies from which to choose depending on the learners and the setting.

I strongly believe that participants in the ESL classroom should be made to experience a number of learning strategies so that they may be able to learn in their preferred manner. The learners I interviewed exhibited preferences for different teaching methods. Some were comfortable working in groups, others preferred individual exercises. All of them enjoyed field trips which were linked to the activities in class or guest speakers who dealt with issues important to their lives. Learners have to be able to

understand their learning styles and their strengths. They also have to acknowledge the limitations of their styles and be encouraged to broaden their capabilities.

Rossman (1993) suggests that the teacher is an actor who is creative, intuitive and sensitive with the ability to use different techniques depending on the needs of the learners. He sees it as very important to grab those teachable moments when they occur and follow through on them. This has been my experience as an ESL teacher. For example, one day in class, learners were sharing their experiences of how difficult it was to leave their homeland to come to a strange country. One learner became very emotional and started crying. The next thing I knew, almost the whole class was in tears but they were all holding each other's hands and trying to comfort each other. I suppose that each was recalling in his/her mind similar unpleasant experiences. However, I saw this as a great teaching moment to focus on their strength as a group, pointing out how important it was to see their similarities rather than their differences. I felt from that moment on, they really *jelled* as a class. Working together became much easier and those who were quicker at learning the language helped the slower learners along. Although, I taught this class almost four years ago, many of those learners are still in touch with me. We formed such a bond that it is difficult not to be concerned about each other.

As was pointed out by learners, teachers in LINC programs sometimes use rote for teaching vocabulary and grammatical structures. Things memorized in this way are oftimes forgotten. If we look back at many of the facts we had to memorize in high school to pass our quizzes, we remember how difficult it was to retain these facts because there was no application involved. Dry rules learnt are quickly forgotten. They need to be applied to real life situations. But some teachers feel that learning has to be a very serious process. If learners are having fun, then no learning is taking place. Vella (1994) says that teachers need to lighten up. In fact she strongly suggests that they turn to using humour as a teaching strategy since she claims that humour does not only lighten things in the classroom, it also enlightens learners. There is the need for ESL learners to laugh at their mistakes and relax as they struggle with new concepts and skills. The energy in the classroom has to be powered from one day to the next. However, it should be noted that

no single method can be used to the exclusion of others since learners come from a variety of backgrounds and have diverse experiences and learning styles.

It is also necessary to underscore the competitive climate which prevails all education, ESL included. If the assumption is that people learn in different ways and at different rates, then a collaborative approach in the classroom will be more meaningful. Learners will be able to generate more creative solutions and gain more in-depth understanding of the use of the language. There is not only collaboration among learners but between learners and teacher, which will make the learning, process a two-way experience.

Assessing Learners Needs

Knowles (1984) says that the starting point of planning the learning process begins from the individual learner's own perception of what she/he wants to become and to achieve. Knowles suggests that "... the critical assessment of the gaps is the learners' own perception of the discrepancy between where they are now and where they want (and need) to be" (p. 125). Gailbrath, Sisco and Guglielmino (1997) would not like this discrepancy to be seen as a deficiency or a lack of knowledge on the part of learners. They find this too narrow a definition and more suited to programs which are remedial in nature. Needs they say, have to be articulated by participants in terms of what their interests are and in which direction they would like to proceed. They strongly believe that without a focus on this type of needs, there can be no sustainable programs.

On this subject Dean (1994) notes that adult educators function as program planners, instructional designers and facilitators of learning and are faced daily with discovering the needs of their learners. This is strongly the case with educators within the ESL field. Dean discusses a number of ways educators have tried to identify learners' needs such as using one's professional experience about learners, consulting with others who are knowledgeable about learners or gathering data from learners' records. Of course Dean is facetious about these assessments made by the "experts" and clearly states that these methods do not work in the interest of learners. As Brundage (1980) points out,

when needs are determined through mind reading and when problems are not clearly defined, assessment becomes very inaccurate and full of misrepresentations and assumptions which lead to ineffective programs and the dissatisfaction of learners. It is no wonder that some learners complained of not learning very much in LINC programs. There was the example cited where the entire class was taught how to use the vacuum cleaner and the public washrooms when there was only a small minority of learners to whom this information was useful. In this context, it was assumed that all learners had the same needs.

The question which comes to mind is whether LINC teachers see learners' needs as one of the most important facets of the program. Learners discussed their desire to clarify issues or situations in class, but teachers do not respond. One of the examples used in the presentation of the data was the learner who wanted to find out why some immigrants are called "bad names" by mainstream Canadians. This was an issue which the teacher was not prepared to address. She did not see the learner's need to do so as important. She took care of her own need, which was avoidance of controversy.

Jarvis (1985) points to the problem of focussing on learning outcomes and not on needs. He said that even before some programs start, teachers are requested to prescribe learning outcomes in terms of the measurement of behaviour. This is one of the weaknesses of traditional education. It hopes that those who design the program can pre-specify the learning outcomes, not taking into consideration all the other spontaneous learning which may take place.

I am reminded of a program I helped to design for newcomers who were encountering difficulties in finding employment because of their lack of basic education, and language skills and their lack of work related skills. This program had to be certified by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development because participants attending would qualify for a grant from the Student Finance Board. One of the criteria for certification was that the program should have measurable outcomes, the most important one being that participants should be employed three months after completion of the program.

However, speaking with participants during, and at the end of the program, they had learnt so many skills that documenting these was almost impossible. Finding a job was indeed important, but participants told of the usefulness of being able to work together as a multicultural group. They learned tolerance for, and developed an understanding of, people of different cultures. They learned how to deal with workplace discrimination during their work placements and they also learned about being polite even when they were angry. One learner described this as "... how some Canadians smile even when they have bad feelings about you because they do not want to show it." They learned to interpret body language, particularly when they could not understand the spoken English around them. They also learned the importance of speaking up for themselves so that their voices would be heard and they would not be ignored. If these outcomes were the ones documented in the program proposal, I am certain that the program would not have been certified. Yet all the learning that took place was very fundamental to this group of people and to their being able to function effectively in the Canadian work environment.

Jarvis (1985) notes that when learning outcomes have to be defined even before the program has started, it is an expression of education designed by those in authority, which is what had happened in this program. It was a case of he who pays the piper calls the tune. However, within some LINC programs also, there is the notion of measurable learning outcomes. In many instances, I have seen LINC curriculum with specific learning outcomes. I am not sure whether a needs assessment of learners was done and included in the curriculum.

At the beginning of the LINC program, teachers seem to do some form of needs assessment at the start of the first class by asking learners what it is they want to learn. Teachers also ask learners to make choices from various learning activities. However, this is not an ongoing process. During the interviews, learners said that in many instances, classes are not about their needs but what teachers need to do. Apparently the needs of programs have to be met, not the needs of learners. For example, program needs which are given a great deal of attention are ensuring that learners do not go beyond their

allotted thousand hours of classes, that all learners have LINC cards or that all learners have been assessed through the LARCC assessment centre.

Brown (1994) suggests that within the ESL classroom, because of the diversity of learners, it is important that this group of people be involved in effective programs that respond to their specific goals and needs. Adult ESL learners come to the classroom for a number of reasons. Some of them would like to communicate with other speakers of English or they would like to learn about the customs and culture of the new country. Others would like to maintain their roles as parents and adults so that they do not have to rely on their children. They would like to gain employment skills or become more proficient in the language so that they can enroll in academic programs.

However, it is sometimes difficult for learners to articulate their needs because of cultural constraints. Vella (1994) shares her experience working with a group of Ethiopian tent dwellers, training them as relief workers during the drought of 1984. She found that at first shot, asking them about their needs did not bring about definite answers. But with continued questioning and discussion, the needs of this group of people became clearer and clearer. Being able to identify the needs and work towards fulfilling these was important because her learners were faced with new complexities and new challenges day after day. The lives of newcomers in Canada are a chain of ever changing events. Adjusting to a new language, a new culture and sometimes a totally new economic environment brings about a barrage of changes, which have to be dealt with on a daily basis. LINC learners would like to have the language tools to respond to these changes but unless teachers seek to find out how these changes are impacting their lives, they will miss the opportunity to provide their learners with answers.

The importance of listening to the wants and needs of our learners cannot be over-emphasized since this will help to shape the kind of program that would have immediate usefulness for our learners. Vella (1994) points out that **listening** to the needs of learners is a very basic principle of adult education. Adults have their own themes and are highly motivated when teaching is geared towards those themes which are important to their lives. In LINC programs, themes are not just figurative but represent a literal approach to language teaching. Language skills are divided into themes such as *Family, Money and*

Banking and *Shopping,* among others but it is necessary to focus on those themes which are important to the present life situation of learners.

Almost three years ago, I did a study on the learning styles of immigrant seniors with a group of men and women from South America who were taking ESL classes. Part of my method for gathering the data was through participant observation so I sat through the classes for most of the program. One day, I watched the teacher struggle to get over to his learners the story of Lorena Babitt who had castrated her husband for sexually assaulting her. This was hot news and had initiated a lot of heated debate in my university classes but, for the seniors, there was no interest in the story. When I questioned a few participants at the end of the class about what they had learned that day, the answer was a unanimous, "nothing." The seniors explained that they had no interest in the topic. They felt that their time would have been better spent discussing some of their day-today problems instead of the problems of Lorena Babitt.

One participant frustratingly informed me that she was really motivated to come to class because she was having a problem with the young man in her neighbouring suite. He played his music too loud at nights and she could not sleep. She wanted him to know that he was a nuisance but she was uncertain what her approach should be. She was really looking forward for assistance from the teacher and if possible, the class. But she declared in her broken English, "Teacher no interested in me. Is my problem. Teacher talk, talk all the time about his own story. I no come back for English." Again, Vella (1994) notes that if the program or the class does not meet the needs of learners, " … they will simply walk out" (p. 5). In fact, she says that adults do not have time to waste and would like to work on those areas or skills which would make an immediate difference to their lives. Their concept of change is often based on the now rather than the hereafter. She advises that teachers should pay attention to what she calls the WWW principle - *who* needs *what* as defined by *whom*. It would seem that within LINC programs, teachers feel that they should get on with the job. It is so much easier to teach from a prescribed curriculum than one which evolves as learners' needs unfold. In my field notes, I had jotted down one LINC teacher as saying, "If I had my way, I would know exactly how to plan for the session." Teachers do not realize that there is nothing called *exact* planning.

Planning is a process which hinges on change. LINC programs have to be flexible enough to respond to change.

Creating a friendly and informal classroom atmosphere

Psunder (1996) declares that the relationship between teacher and learners will set the tone for cooperation and learning in the classroom. Dennett (1995), in discussing the effect of the classroom atmosphere on adult second language learners, points out that there is a relationship between the classroom environment and learners' concept of themselves. She notes that if a learner feels accepted by the teacher and fellow learners, then, there is a high feeling of self-worth. On the other hand, learners who experience non-acceptance suffer from low self-esteem. As was discussed by some of the learners interviewed for this study, they do feel marginalized when their teachers do not value their contribution to the class. One learner clearly stated that she felt the teacher's perception of her was "stupid." This perception has definitely influenced the way the learner sees herself and has a bearing on the progress she made with her learning. If a negative self-concept is developed in ESL classrooms, learners' progress and their ability to interact and socialize in the real world can be undermined. As Dennett (1995) claims, self-concept "... can be an important factor which influences the individual's integration into Canadian society" (p. 30). Bailey and Celce-Murcia (1979) in their article, *Classroom Skills for ESL Teachers* have found that the learning environment is one of the most important facets of the language learning experience and exerts a tremendous influence on learners' progress.

Referring to my field notes, I would like to recall an incident where a learner who was somewhat aggressive was labelled a "trouble maker" by the teacher. He was shunned in class and made to look very foolish. The other learners teased him and he was sometimes the laughing stock of the class. He came to the class but seldom participated in activities. At coffee break I would often see him sitting all alone. Sometimes when a few sympathetic learners approached him, he would become really angry. His language skills did not improve in any significant way, neither did his social skills.

Dennett (1995) suggests that the multicultural environment within ESL has a powerful influence on either building up or destroying learners' self worth. The teaching strategies used and the attitude of the teacher and other participants can influence learners' perception of their self-worth. Teachers need to be aware of learners' feelings of inadequacy and try to restore their faith in themselves and their abilities. From the data gathered, learners did address this issue. They disclosed being reluctant to become to close to the teacher because of their feelings of inadequacy. Their preference was to keep the gap since teachers do not really understand their struggle. They saw teachers as their superiors and themselves as "not good enough." Some learners spoke of the patronizing attitude of teachers. There were some teachers who would try to assist with their problems but not in a manner which respected them as equals. They describe teachers as fitting into the missionary role where they were the uneducated who should be "converted" into becoming good Canadians.

Some teachers unknowingly exhibit discriminatory attitudes and may be shocked to learn that their teaching methods were responsible for lowering learners' self-esteem. Robinett (1997) says that teachers can create either a very positive or negative classroom atmosphere based on their teaching strategies. Some teachers are bent on getting on with curriculum content and will use whatever methods get them through this as fast as possible. Others are more concerned with the needs of learners and targetting their teaching to meet these needs even if it means working at a slower pace. Learners did mention that they appreciate teachers who are patient and understanding. Psunder (1996) found that the qualities of a good teacher are tolerance, patience, warmth, sensitivity and open-mindedness. She proclaims that, "Effective teachers are those who remember that the student is the most important part of the teaching/learning process." (p. 43).

Beder (1989) feels that within language learning situations, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to establish a good rapport with their learners because many of them work part time. They may be involved with other primary work and are in the organization for only short blocks of time. Their primary work may take precedence over their language teaching. They come to the classrooms, teach and then leave. Within this situation there is not sufficient time for them to come to know their learners and to

develop strong relationships with them. Our experience in Edmonton is that teaching LINC is a very uncertain and risky occupation. LINC teachers live from one contract to the next. There is uncertainty and sometimes for financial security, teachers have to hold another job while teaching on these programs.

As an ESL teacher, I have found it very important to spend time with my learners and to establish positive classroom relationships. I have also found that such relationships are not necessarily established within the classroom itself. For example, about five years ago, I had an ESL class of twenty learners from eight different nationalities and with varying levels of language skills. Learners were sometime frustrated with some of the activities we did because they were either too difficult or too simplistic. There were also cross-cultural misunderstandings and at times the tension in the classroom became unbearable. My strategy for dealing with this situation was taking the class for coffee on a regular basis. During these informal social gatherings there was a lot of experiences shared and a lot of frustration vented. People let down their guard and really talked about themselves and issues they saw as problems. Learners claimed that they were reluctant to do this in class since they perceived the classroom as related only to formally learning the language and a place where everyone needed to be *politically correct.*

These social gatherings did not only help me to understand my learners, but also helped learners to understand each other. Having broken the ice in the cafeteria, and having set the tone for more informal relationships, it was easy to transfer this to the classroom. What I observed was that the more the classroom atmosphere became relaxed, the more learners were willing to take risks and try out new aspects of the language. This is very much related to the findings of Psunder (1996) who advocates that only by establishing a personal relationship with learners can teachers gain feedback and develop a two way communication process. She stresses that one way communication does not facilitate dialogue. The teacher has to establish a humane form of relationship involving the exchange of ideas, taking each other into account and embarking on a mutual learning process.

It should be noted, however, that classroom interactions and climate may vary from culture to culture. It is sometimes very possible to misread cultural behaviours. An

East Indian woman who is shy and retiring may have come from a culture which values the opinions men, not women. It is therefore important for LINC teachers to be involved in cultural awareness education. Where such education cannot be formally established, it is important for teachers to learn about the cultural differences (and similarities) of their participants. This will be a learning experience not only for the teacher but for the other participants as well. This knowledge can certainly be used by teachers to create a more positive learning environment where learners will be motivated to participate in their language learning.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary

In the final analysis of whether LINC programs in Edmonton are guided by adult education practice and whether they facilitate adult immigrants to take control of their own learning experiences, we need to question who are the adult learners that access these programs. To begin with, they are adult learners from many different backgrounds who bring with them to the classroom a world of knowledge and a wealth of experience regardless of their proficiency in English. They are often people who have survived quite well in circumstances beyond our imagination. Those who have had no formal education oftimes possess a great deal of *strategic competence* which enables them to somehow negotiate and traverse life's pathways with some degree of confidence. The life experiences of these learners can serve as a tremendous educational resource if teachers make the effort to tap in to these experiences.

Generally, these adult ESL learners are highly motivated. They need to acquire English to survive in the new community. They need to find employment, improve their education and their status in society. Like other adult learners, they learn best when programs focus on their own personal goals and objectives and when they can see the relationship between classroom experiences and their real world needs. They need a classroom environment which gives them control over their learning and takes into account their different learning styles.

Although LINC learners may be seen as a generic group of people with some very general characteristics, they still remain individuals bringing their own unique and personal realities, including unique needs and goals, into the classroom. The educational system, therefore, has to be prepared to accept, respect, accommodate and respond to these individual goals and needs. Adult ESL learners have to be valued for their experiences. They have to be treated with unconditional respect and teachers have to be aware of passing judgment and making assumptions. They are in the classroom not to be

patronized but to be involved in the learning exchange. Like other adult learners, they have values and opinions which they would like to share. This was evident in the case of the learner who was explaining about the political and social dimensions of the war in her country when the teacher shut her up. Her feeling was that the teacher had no respect for her knowledge nor for her first-hand native experience. He did not think her capable of any in-depth analysis.

Sometimes the assumption we make as educators is that not knowing a language is equivalent to not being knowledgeable. LINC learners are quite versed with what goes on in their everyday lives. In one classroom, if we could pool all their experiences together, what tremendous resources we would be able to amass. What is missing in their lives is being able to communicate in ***English.***

Reflecting on my field notes, I noted a conversation I had with an ESL learner almost three years ago where she declared that teachers did not value learners' experiences and knowledge. She said that she had met ESL teachers who had visited her native Taiwan for a brief spell but on their return to Canada, they had become experts in the politics, economics and social dynamics of the country even more than the native Taiwanese. She discussed her experience in an ESL class where the teacher claimed profound knowledge of what the problems are in Taiwan and was an expert at presenting solutions. She said that she was very motivated and had very deep *gut feelings* about the issues raised in class. She wanted to share her knowledge but she found that her explanations did not count. When the teacher tried to alienate her from the discussion, she described her feelings as " ... a ship where the wind was taken away from the sails." On this account, Brundage (1980) notes that for adults, learning is a normal physiological-psychological activity, which proceeds out of an inner drive fuelled by personal energy rather than external directions controlled by rewards and punishment. Sometimes the teacher's dilemma is not how to motivate their learners but rather how to avoid setting up disincentives and obstacles which will retard, block and de-motivate them.

Again, on the issue of teachers who have worked overseas, it is interesting to note that some teachers think about the times they have travelled to other countries and use this experience to make judgments and assessments of their learners. I have heard

statements such as "when I was in Korea, I had no trouble getting around. It was great! The culture was strange, but I adjusted quite well. I do not know why students find it so difficult to adjust to Canadian culture." The experiences of these teachers, however, could be viewed as just transient, a *detachment* for a short period of time. The immigrants and refugees who are in LINC programs do not have the comfort of such detachment. They are here because of very different factors. With refugees, they may not have had a choice. What this means for the teacher is that the classroom has to be a place that welcomes learners and encourages them to become a part of the new environment. Many newcomers have lost their jobs, their homes, their status, their dignity and all the other things that make life worth living. To give them a voice and to value their experience and expertise is a start to the recovery of their self-esteem. This is even more important when learners are experiencing rejection in the new society. There is sometimes the feeling that immigrants and refugees are threats to Canadians with regard to taking their jobs away or being a burden on an already over loaded welfare system. In these instances, the response they receive from Canadian society is one of prejudice and rejection.

LINC programs as adult education have to be agents of social change. They are not programs just to develop the communication skills of learners but to develop these within the wider social context. Learners themselves also have to develop to their fullest potential so that they can play meaningful roles in their society. The pre-requisite for becoming empowered and active in one's society is definitely being literate, but not literate in the sense of being capable of just reading and writing, but being able to critically analyze and interpret information, to separate fact from fiction, myth from reality and to be able to use one's literacy ability to make changes if these are seen as necessary. The bottom line is being able to read the lines and being able to read *through* the lines.

It should be noted that language is an instrument of power (Macedo, 1994). Ideology theorists discuss how language learners, based on what they are taught, define roles for themselves which cause them to conform in their language behaviour to the dominant influences of the social environment. Corson (1993) states that in their language usage, the learners of a second language adhere to the linguistic norms created

by the dominant group and do not recognize that they are *voluntarily coerced* so that they lose their power. It can be argued that institutions of learning have the potential to repress, dominate and disempower language learners whose practices differ from the norm. They can do this in very subtle ways while conveying a reality that is partisan. Jarvis (1985:61) notes that the structures of our society are definitely hierarchical and do lead to education being placed within the same framework so that much of education is planned and practised in the same hierarchical manner "... indicating the extent to which hierarchical elements have been internalized and no other way appears possible."

It is important to see that whoever has the power to define the context and language code that describes that context is empowered. Macedo (1994) is concerned that if learners accept that definition without question, they will at the same time accept their disempowerment in that setting. He feels that the disempowered perceive and respond to the world in particular ways and that through language, the practices of a society are reinvented and perpetuated. It should be noted then that language is a key factor in maintaining the traditions and conventions of society. It would seem that such practices are a part of LINC programs.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this study are as follows:

1. LINC programs should highlight a more critical and creative function for learners to live more rewarding lives in society in which they have a hand in shaping. These programs should highlight the development of practical skills and knowledge that people will be able to use in their everyday lives together with the stimulation of questions and dialogue. We cannot shut up the people we teach in our classrooms. We cannot teach them the doctrine of acceptance and passivity. There is the feeling that LINC learners should be *yes* instead of *why* people. They are in the classrooms because they just need information about Canadian living so that they can inobscurely settle down in the new country. It seems that they are

good learners when they passively assimilate whatever information is passed on to them. If we would like to develop a critical thinking citizenry with regard to the newcomers who will be woven into the fabric of Canadian society, then, we need to provide them with the opportunity to play an active role in shaping their future and the future of their country.

LINC programs have to focus on people as individuals within a social context. Activities should be designed which allow room for reflecting and questioning the social conditions which exist. The example of the learner who asked why immigrants are called *bad names* by mainstream Canadians is again worth mentioning. He was not told by the teacher to shut up but her silence on the issue prevented any further discussions or clarifications. This shying away from dealing with **real** issues will not help learners to develop as critical thinking citizens. This was an incident that needed to be discussed within the present political and social context of Canada. But these sensitive issues scare teachers because they force them to take an inner look at their own values, beliefs and biases.

2. LINC teachers should operate as reflective practitioners. The philosophical foundation from which teachers operate direct the way they relate to learners and plan and conduct their learning activities. It influences their beliefs about what is right and just, what is possible and what is acceptable. Many of a person's fundamental beliefs about life and work are so deeply entrenched in his or her reality that there is sometimes no conscious awareness that such beliefs exist and that is why one's philosophy may be based on unchallenged assumptions uncritically accepted. A philosophy of teaching ESL has to be surfaced and examined since it will provide the springboard from which practitioners will jump. They can critically reflect on their worldviews and the paradigm that govern their practice. Teachers' awareness of their philosophy will enable them to articulate their grounds for the style of education and practice they select.

People's underlying values and assumptions provide the guideline for making decisions (Collins, 1986). In his paper entitled *Philosophy and the Role of Adult Educators* which he presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, Collins clearly points out that it is important for practitioners to recognize that a philosophical orientation is integral to the practice of education. This entails more than merely theorizing but looking at the concrete. Teachers may think that they have the best philosophical perspective towards education but this would be evidenced in *what* is their practice. As has been the case with some LINC teachers, they claim that they do share the view of a participatory approach to education but in actual classroom practice they still maintain the stance of control over learners. Collins says that educators have to dig deep and look hard to see from which direction they approach their practice.

3. Teachers themselves have to become critical thinkers. They have to place less emphasis on teaching techniques and more focus on promoting a critical and analytical stance to learning. How learning is conducted will have an effect on its outcomes. It has been my experience that LINC teachers extend a great deal of energy on perfecting instrumental teaching techniques and methodologies. At several ESL conferences I have attended, I have noted the trend of which sessions become oversubscribed to and which ones run with empty seats. Any presentation or demonstration that has to do with a teaching technique, for example the teaching of pronunciation or a grammar game to help teachers *teach* the different parts of speech, receives significant attention. If it is a session that has to do with the actual practice of education, teachers tend to treat this with less importance. I mentioned this to one teacher at a seminar and her response was, "Oh, it's so easy talking about things that we can readily practice. We need to leave the session with something that we can actually do." It would seem that there is no big rush for teachers to focus on the broader objectives of learning. Their focus is on learning outcomes which have to be measured.

Critical stances to learning ask for teachers to analyze critically the context in which they operate. Eccelstone (1996) suggests that teachers should take a hard look at the social order and see how their beliefs, goals and practices are influenced by the institutional structures and political constraints. Teachers need to take time to examine their values and beliefs and to see how these are tied to social norms and the maintenance of the status quo. What teachers ought to do is compare how different stakeholders, including the learners, benefit from the current education practice and how changes are facilitated or inhibited by these.

Thomas (1982:18) suggests that teachers should look beyond the goal, objectives and purpose of the program and focus on its effect. He discusses the role of education in perpetuating the dominant social structure using the example of educating American blacks after the civil war. This group of people was educated specifically for industrialization – a decision made by the policy makers that they should be educated for profit. The goal of their education was seen as equipping them to work in shops and farms. There was no money to be wasted on areas such as medicine, law, theology, literature, science and art.

This is where it becomes necessary for teachers to stop and question the purpose of shaping the educational experiences in which they involve learners. We need to question whether an analogy can be drawn between the American blacks and ESL education for immigrants. What are the societal expectations? Similar to the case of the blacks, are immigrants being educated to fill specific roles pre-determined by the unequal structure of the society in which they live?

Brookfield (1987) calls for critical thinking as a part of teachers' practice. ESL educators need to question the information, systems and practices related to the field. They have to be willing to challenge assumptions and advocate for change. If teachers hope to facilitate the growth of critical consciousness among learners, then it will be contradictory if they do not practice what they preach. There is no reason to follow unquestioningly educational practices which have become trends and patterns without anyone knowing why, particularly those trends nurtured by the so called *experts*. If teachers become involved in critical

action on a regular basis, then after a while, this will become a very automatic and ingrained process. The critical thinking ESL practitioner becomes less concerned with applying knowledge and skills and more concerned with improving his or her practice for the benefit of learners so that they in turn will become critical thinkers. Critical thinking does not mean coming up with the ideal answer but it is the process of working towards finding that answer.

4. There should be formal training for LINC and other ESL teachers to equip them for working with adult learners. Again, it has been my experience that too many teachers who work in the adult ESL field are elementary trained teachers for the public or separate school systems. The requirements for teaching ESL in most institutions/agencies in Edmonton are a B Ed. Degree and an Alberta Teaching Certificate. Rice and Stavrianos (1995) find this to be the same in the United States. They concur that many ESL teachers have their degrees for working with children, not adults. It is felt that as long as one is competent in the language, teaching it to adults is automatically assigned. There is no insistence that teachers should participate in some systematic training program of adult education; but it is necessary for teachers to be engaged in training which would clarify their beliefs and values about adult ESL learners and their perceptions about the qualities of an adult education facilitator. The learners interviewed for this study pointed out that their teachers should have more knowledge working with adult learners. They underscored that they were not kids and did not wish to be regarded in the same way. As one learner suggested, "Teachers have to go to university so that they can learn to teach us a s adults ..."

Staff development is definitely a major issue in the adult ESL arena Arguments have been made for ESL teachers to receive formal training before they are allowed to become instructors. There have been many debates over the skills and credentials that teachers should possess, as well as, the cultural and linguistic backgrounds they should bring to programs. At present, there seems to be a split over the credentials issue with two major thoughts emerging. One side

maintains that adult ESL teachers will not be treated as professionals unless the field establishes and maintains clear certification or credential guidelines. The other position feels that academic credentials do not guarantee that any instructor would be successful at teaching language learners. There are some people who are sometimes reluctant to hire teachers, for example, with an M.A. degree in linguistics to work with beginning level learners. The professional and personal experiences of these teachers may be far too removed from the realities of the learners.

The difficulty of setting professional standards for ESL teachers also stems from the fact that many adult ESL teaching positions are part-time. ESL teachers work for relatively low wages, few, if any benefits and they have very little job security. Their positions are short-term contracts and are often dependent on the number of learners enrolled in the program or the continuity of funding. Many of them cannot depend on their ESL teaching for a living.

However, at present, there seems to be no consensus in the ESL field on qualifications and credentials. Within Alberta, the Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) has been contracted by Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development to design ESL program standards for adult ESL. Teacher credential is an issue of focus and from initial discussions, it would seem that at least a B Ed. Degree and ATESL accreditation would be the preference. My hope is that there would be the opportunity not only to define standards for teacher certification but to also demand better employment opportunities for teachers which perhaps means increased and sustainable funding for ESL programs.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the way LINC and other ESL programs are structured has to with the control of those who set the guidelines and parameters of these programs. There is sometimes a feeling of lethargy among teachers that those who hold the strings

of the purse have the ultimate power to make decisions and therefore changes are not worth pursuing. It is a known fact that the subsidies for language programs for adult immigrants, including LINC, are often based on the number of learners. These subsidies are not designed to improve the quality of life of the underprivileged. Within the local competitive situation, organizations which have the money to market and advertise, or those who provide additional services are in the leading position to be financed. Organizations in good standing are those which have very structured programs and standardized tests which measure pre-specified outcomes at the end of the program. A test score cannot measure the difference a program has made to the lives of learners. I tend to question the reality of a learner being able to score 90% on a grammar test, but who is still unable to discuss with her child's teacher an incident of racial prejudice where the child has been a victim. To bring about positive changes, it is necessary that language training funds be earmarked for programs which effectively help learners to be active participants in their society. Ultimately, this is a political question. The biggest stumbling block in the area of ESL funding is the prevailing notion that adult language training programs do not have much to do with politics. ESL learning is located within a paradigm of political and social control and unless there is a paradigm shift, programs will be unable to effectively serve the learners in ways that work to their advantage.

Kulich (1991:94) observes that adult education programs in general in Canada are "... marked by competition rather than cooperation among providers." This includes ESL programs. The competitive nature of ESL funding leads to the mushrooming of all different kinds of programs to attract funding dollars. There is such a vast array of program providers drawn from the public, private, for-profit and non-profit sectors. In theory, such a wide range of service providers would seem to be beneficial in meeting a wide range of learners' needs. It would seem that there would be a variety of pedagogical approaches and the provision of a wide spectrum of services which would lead to a more holistic approach to program delivery. But in actual practice, ESL delivery is very fragmented. There is limited communication and cooperation among providers and the need to compete for the same funds makes people more closed than open to sharing information. This results in duplication of services or diluted services with programs not

only competing for the same dollars but also for the same learners, while other learners are forced to attend other programs which are inappropriate.

There are sometimes tentative efforts at cooperation and collaboration to help learners find appropriate programs, reducing the need for similar efforts by each provider but these efforts are still overshadowed by the need to protect one's *turf*. Providers articulate collaboration and become involved in cooperative ventures if it brings them the desired funding dollars but they are still wary of operating in a very competitive financial scenario. I sometimes see this as analogous to playing a game of chess. One false move can take a provider completely out of the picture or have that provider swallowed up by the other partner. However, the bottom line of all of this is what it does for the learners. The diversity of programs and program providers can be bewildering for adult ESL learners attempting to find an appropriate ESL class.

There is the belief that competition among service providers leads to improved programs and services but with adult ESL, funding is so limited and funding cycles so short that a great deal of time and effort is expended in seeking and maintaining funding, searching for potential funding sources, writing funding proposals and meeting reporting requirements. There is very little time left to spend on program development and improvement. Many adult ESL programs including LINC operate on a shoestring budget. These kinds of financial support do not encourage providers to serve learners. Also, some budgets for programs make it difficult for programs to serve learners because of inappropriate entry requirements. For example, with LINC, a learner has to be a landed immigrant to be eligible. This program makes no provision for learners who had to find employment immediately upon their arrival in Canada and who did not have the luxury of attending ESL classes because of their twelve or fourteen hours of shift work. Later, when it becomes convenient for them to access these classes, learners are told that they do not qualify simply because they have become Canadian citizens. Also LINC programs allow learners a stipulated 1000 or 1200 hours of language learning. Not all adult language learners progress at the same pace. Their rate of learning is influenced by factors such as age, previous education, previous knowledge of the language and other personal issues in learners' lives. Yet, all of them are allocated the same number of hours.

All the above mentioned factors help to determine the shape, nature and scope of LINC and other ESL programs. They all have a role to play in the way learning is designed and how the language learning needs of learners are facilitated. These social, political and economic boundaries limit ESL programs, making them narrow and instrumental instead of open, democratic and responsive. They help to stifle the growth of learners, alienating and marginalizing them from the critical thinking citizenry.

Adult ESL programs including LINC programs within a framework of adult education need to be dynamic, responsive and proactive. As needs of learners and situations in society change, programs will have to rise to meet the challenge of those changes. One of the greatest challenges is for the development of creative adult ESL programs which would address the serious problems learners face particularly in terms of their integration into Canadian society. Programs have to help learners to overcome the communication barriers they face, help them find a place in the new society, so that they can become active participants instead of marginalized aliens. They need to be able to challenge the inequalities which exist in terms of unemployment opportunities, prejudice and racism among others. ESL programs have to provide both the essential knowledge and skills and also the opportunity to develop alternative visions for democratic social change. Teachers have to show a commitment to improving the lot of their learners and also improving their practice, a willingness to be flexible and understanding of learners' needs and the capacity to draw out the best in each learner while promoting his or her development to the fullest. They also need to have the capacity for dialogue with learners and the ability to relinquish power and control in the classroom.

But changes within ESL programs as adult education practice have to be more than improving teachers' skills and attitudes and spending money wisely. There has to be the re-invention of adult ESL programs as more than a means of processing people. Programs have to be seen as ways of creating knowledge and developing the critical thinking skills of learners. Adult ESL programs have to become places where ordinary people can experience the possibilities of democratic participation and the exercise of control over their lives.

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